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COMMONSENSE OR PRESTIGE?

TOGETHER with a great part of mankind in China and the United States as well as in India we have had to read the daily reports of Mr. Gandhi's condition with a deepening sense of impending tragedy. It is our conviction that his death as the result of this fast would dig a gulf between us and the Indian people which might for a generation defy all our efforts to bridge it. What alarms us is not so much the outbreak of anger and the acts of repression that would follow this leader's death: far worse would be the cold, irreconcilable sense of alienation that would for long years divide us. At the best of times neither people finds it easy to understand the other. But if we let Mr. Gandhi die, in the eyes of Indians a martyr, the deduction throughout the Asiatic world would be that no understanding can ever be possible.

By a cool reckoning of loss and gain, we would urge that the final alienation of the Indian people, to say nothing of the effect in other countries, would be incomparably more disastrous than any hypothetical loss of prestige. What we may lose by yielding is commonly exaggerated. We have encountered no one like this saintly rebel during all the generations we have ruled over India. Other nationalist leaders have been respected and admired, but this man is idolised. In this strange land, flooded as it still is and always was by its ever-present gods, the Mahatma is for most Hindus and even for some Moslems something more than a saint: they feel that God is in him. If we give way, they will not think that we have yielded to "moral blackmail" or political pressure. They will think that the hand of God was in it and that a new opportunity of reconciliation is offered to both countries. To yield to Him is not in their eyes weakness: it is piety.

The Western reader must forgive us if we write in this Oriental dialect. We are, let us assure him, in our own persons as Western-minded as he is himself. But it happens that we know Mr. Gandhi fairly well, and have taken some pains to grasp, without accepting, his view of the universe. There, it may be, we have an advantage over most of "the men on the spot." For a generation now, a cleavage so deep has separated the Bureaucracy from the more decidedly nationalist Indians, that they never meet, or if they do occasionally meet, it is only in frigid ceremonial intercourse. The argument of Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, that Mr. Gandhi is fasting in order to secure his unconditional release, reveals this total lack of comprehension. His fast is an appeal, as he conceives it, to the divine government of the world. He believes that if, with a pure mind, he offers himself as a sacrifice, God will be pleased to soften the hearts of India's rulers. This is not merely our guess. Mr. Rajagopalachari, who knows him as relative, friend and colleague without sharing his peculiar outlook, has said the same thing in precisely these words.

Here we are obviously in a world beyond logic. We like and approve these other-worldly tactics as little as most Englishmen do. This fast is not an appeal to reason, and most of us try, with indifferent success, to live by its light. But does the Government of India rely on rational persuasion? Its arrest and detention of Mr. Gandhi without trial were assuredly not an appeal to reason. As a result of this preventive measure, it has had to go on using what he describes as "leonine violence" against angry mobs of his admirers. Up to the end of last December, 60,000 persons had been arrested: 538 times the police and troops have fired, while the killed number 940 Indians and the injured 1,630. The number punished by the unforgivable humiliation of whipping was given by Mr. Amery as 958. These are not the effects of logic.

So far from fearing that the peace of India would suffer by Mr. Gandhi's release, we think it probable, as his own letters to the Viceroy suggested, that if he could look around him and convince himself that his own followers did resort to serious violence, he might use all his influence to end disobedience, as he did in like circumstances in 1922. If that happened, a way to agreement with the Moslems might be opened up. He has not himself asked for release. That he contemplates reconciliation is in our view clear from his suggestion that he might find a way out of the impasse if he were put among his colleagues of the Working Committee of Congress. But whatever the outcome of a renewed effort at conciliation, the one certainty is that his death would have consequences incomparably graver and more lasting than anything that could result from his release. It is not sentiment, but a sober, utilitarian calculation that calls for his liberation.

"Second Front"

True though it be that the Government cannot reveal or debate in Parliament the operational plans of the Anglo-American Command we cannot share the view expressed in the House of Lords by Lord Simon, and echoed for the Labour peers by Lord Listowel, that Lord Beaverbrook's plea for an early invasion of North-West Europe was a disservice to the country. On the contrary, Lord Beaverbrook did well to emphasise the great danger of complacency in Britain. There is a tendency, against which Mr. Maisky issued on Tuesday a timely warning, to believe that the U.S.S.R. is willing and able to win the war for us, and that a United Nations' victory, at no great cost to the land forces of Britain and the U.S.A., is inevitable and reasonably imminent. This is a dangerous delusion. Unaided—and in his Order of the Day Stalin paid scant regard to the Democracies' contribution up to date—the U.S.S.R. could probably destroy the German army in the long run. But it might be a very long run. At the cost, it may be, of prejudicing his agricultural and industrial production in 1944-45 Hitler's great 1943 "comb-out" will serve to make good a substantial part of his immediate losses at the front and may well enable the German generals either to risk a final, desperate offensive or to put up a formidable and protracted resistance on a shortened line. Stalin, whose Order once again disclaimed "conquest" as the Red Army's objective, might well feel that if the Germans, soundly beaten, were driven back into Poland, the security of the U.S.S.R. would be adequately secured. But if it be unwise to rely on Russian willingness to continue a costly offensive after Russian soil, by Russian exertions, has been liberated, it is still more patently unwise to assume that 1943 will witness an inevitable decision in the western Allies' favour unless they do much more than they are at present doing to win it. We have said before, and we repeat, that, owing to limitations of transport long-distance operations in the Mediterranean, cannot be counted as more than subsidiary (and, it might be held, uneconomical) diversions. This would seem to be Stalin's view, to judge by his marked silence on Tunisia. If what Lord Beaverbrook meant was that Allied forces must get to grips at the earliest moment with the German army in a theatre in which Hitler cannot afford to yield ground and to which our supplies and reinforcements have quick access both by sea and air, he was right. And he was right to say it.

Ukraine and Tunisia

A new factor, intermittent thaw, is evidently entering into operations by the Russians against the great German bulge south-east of Kharkov. Unable probably to disengage, and compelled in consequence to fight continued heavy rearguard actions, the German armies in the Donbass salient are still slowly falling back; but the more confident tone of recent communiqués from Hitler's headquarters suggests that the line of retreat is less seriously menaced than appeared to be the case a week ago. The deadly threat was the wedge, or wedges, driven by the Russians from the area of Lozovaya towards the railway bridge at Dnepropetrovsk. To stem that thrust directed at the sole good line of communications with the Donbass the Germans have doubtless thrown in every available tank, gun and man. The absence of any Russian claims to be making headway in this crucial sector appears to indicate that they may have been temporarily halted by a combination of mud and strong enemy reinforcements. This may enable the Germans to extricate themselves from the Donbass, but it by no means follows that the Russians' grand strategic plan for the winter's campaign is thwarted. North of Kharkov the thaw comes as a rule weeks later, and between Kharkov and Orel the Russian offensive sweeps forward with sustained impetus on a wide front. Meanwhile, the German and Rumanian forces cut off round Novorossisk are being compressed into a diminishing bridge-head from which evacuation means heavy losses of guns and equipment. Unfortunately the process of ejecting the enemy from their other bridge-head—that in Tunisia—has been going less well. Taking advantage of interior lines and making all possible use of the pause before the British Eighth Army attacks him in the south, Rommel has launched some of his refurbished armour in a powerful thrust against the right wing, composed mainly of U.S. troops, of the First Army in Central Tunisia. Correspondents' despatches make it plain that he has done serious damage and may do more; but he must always be looking over his shoulder to the south.

China's War

Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who has taken America by storm, warned her audience of Senators and Representatives that Japan grows stronger with every day she is left in possession of her conquests. Japan's resources are now greater than those controlled by Germany. This was also the main theme of the Chinese press last week when the Japanese opened an offensive on the middle Yangtse in the Ichang and Shasi regions of Hupeh. Chinese writers saw in this offensive, which is on a larger scale than for many months past, the Japanese answer to Casablanca. Whilst President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill have given specific pledges that they will rally to China's support, they displayed more anxiety over the European situation; the Chinese interpret Japan's offensive as Tokio's natural decision to make the most of this breathing space. Unless and until China is provided with aeroplanes and petrol, with heavy arms and military supplies, Japan can afford to risk large-scale offensives. The main problem for the Chinese is transport. At Madame Chiang Kai-shek's press conference in Washington last week the chief Lend-Lease administrator, Mr. Edward Stettinius, announced the creation of a China division in his administration "in recognition of the expanding possibilities for increased lend-lease aid to China." But he admitted that half of the supplies dispatched to China still remained in India. Thus the key to China's critical needs is to be found in an offensive which would reopen the Burma Road, and it is this "second front" in Asia which our Chinese ally demands with great vigour.

Conflict in Yugoslavia

The Soviet Government has addressed a note to the Yugoslav Government in London, which, in the words of the *News Chronicle*, alleges that the Soviet Government "has in its possession indisputable proof that General Mihailovitch, the Serbian guerilla leader and War Minister of the Yugoslav Government, has been acting in collusion with the Axis elements in Yugoslavia." We know nothing of the Yugoslav reply. Official quarters in this country appear to be hesitating and divided on the subject. The War Office apparently still regards General Mihailovitch as a fighting ally, in spite of incontrovertible testimony that for many months now resistance to the Axis has mainly come from the "partisans," who are themselves subject to attacks from the forces serving under General Mihailovitch. The European news service of the B.B.C. is now more realistic; its recent Yugoslav talks have been increasingly concerned with partisan resistance. We can, however, discover no recognition of partisan resistance in the bulletins of the Yugoslav Military Cabinet, which uses the weekly periods allowed it by the B.B.C. to extol General Mihailovitch in talks which are distinguished only by their romantic nationalism. The fact that real resistance now comes from the partisans and not from General Mihailovitch, is not seriously in dispute. In stating this at some length in our article of February 6th we did not ourselves, for lack of clear evidence, give currency to the story that General Mihailovitch was in collusion with the Axis. This allegation is now, it seems, made on the authority of the Soviet Government. The danger of collision between the liberating Powers in the Balkans to which we have frequently drawn attention is thus sharply emphasised.

The Labour Party and the C.P.

The Labour Party has issued a statement of the reasons for rejecting the renewed application of the Communist Party for affiliation. Logically, the Labour Party's response is unanswerable. It points out that, though the C.P. promises full compliance with the Labour Party's constitution and policy, its adherence to the Communist International means that it cannot in practice be expected to carry out this pledge. The C.P. is, constitutionally, simply the British section of the Communist International, and is fully committed to carrying out the orders not only of the Conference of that International, but also, between Conferences, of the International Executive Committee. In effect, what the Labour Party says is that adherence to a centralised International, which claims the right on all occasions to issue binding orders to all its sections and to all their members, is inconsistent with affiliation to the Labour Party as a body claiming the right to shape its own policy and to enforce obedience to that policy on its affiliated bodies. The two "sovereignties" conflict; and no body can own allegiance to both. That is unanswerable in logic; and the plain moral is that, if the Communists want unity, they must seek it in the realm of a united International and not as a purely local British concern.

Electricity from the Highlands

Mr. Johnston, in his speech introducing the Hydro-electricity Bill, revealed that the Government have adopted the Cooper Report almost without modification: bulk export of power, subsidisation of electro-metallurgical industry, denial of electricity to the Highlanders, destruction of the Glens and all. The actual Bill does not embody all these points; it involves them, however: the guarantee of £30,000,000 is meant, as the Secretary for Scotland was too honest to conceal, to finance the big schemes which demand the ruin of Glen Affric and Glen Moriston; any industry placed in the North itself would not demand more than a sixth of the power; it is export that is the wrecker. This fact, which nobody in the debate faced, made the impassioned appeals of the Government speakers to the superior claims of human welfare over natural beauty ring somewhat false; it is not to provide the Highland people with work or amenities, but to buttress the hydro-electric profits, that the country is to be savaged. Foreshadowed amendments in Committee may possibly ameliorate it. Mr. Johnston laid great stress upon the residuary control of Parliament over the construction schemes, but this, as several Members pointed out, is purely negative; the procedure is that the scheme is to lie upon the table, when the House may resolve not to veto it—a safe device used for legislation for subject races, in the certainty that the House will never exercise its veto. The interested bodies, such as the Saltire Society and the Scottish Reconstruction Committee, have urged the Government to embody electric development in a general scheme for the regeneration of the Highlands. That would be the right course.

Beveridge Aftermath (*By a Parliamentary Correspondent*)

Last week's debate, in which the Labour Party put on their Whips against a Government containing some of its own members, because the Party disapproved of the Government's handling of the Beveridge Report, has brought into the open the awkward dilemma in which the Party is placed. The vast majority of Labour M.P.s undoubtedly want the Coalition Government to continue; they feel it essential to maintain national unity at a time when the Second Front is supposed to be on the way, and they want to have some say from inside now that plans for post-war reconstruction are being initiated. On the other hand, they do not feel that they must accept without criticism everything their leaders recommend, even when these leaders say they have got the best bargain they can within the Coalition. There is no cut-and-dried way out of the difficulty. If the Labour Party are frequently to vote against the Government, sooner or later they will have to withdraw from the Government. It is not unreasonable, however, to expect an increase in differences between Left and Right now that plans for reconstruction have started to come forward, and the Government should be prepared to allow greater independence among their supporters on such issues if national unity on the war is to be maintained.

Bevin is very sore over the rebuff given him when the Party defied him despite his threat of resignation. He was never treated in this way by his trade union. Attlee hardly seems to have counted in the controversy. Morrison has increased his stature if not his popularity. There is little doubt that his speech saved the Government's face by conciliating the Tory Left and persuading 20 or 30 Labour M.P.s to abstain. He appears to have fought hard inside the Cabinet sub-committee to get as much as possible of the Report, and his rebuke of the Labour Party for not giving sufficient attention to increasing the national income as well as to how to distribute what already exists, was certainly courageous. The last has not been heard of the conflict between the eleemosynary and constructive planning sides of the Socialist creed.

Tory back-benchers saw the Beveridge crisis develop with some pleasure. There are large sections of the Conservative Party who would like to return to Tory Government now that they feel the danger of defeat is past.

CAN WE AFFORD IT?

Only one argument of any apparent substance looms up behind the Government's temporising over the Beveridge Report—that Great Britain after the war may be too poor to afford the luxury of this instalment of social justice. No one, or at all events hardly anyone, denies that most of the Beveridge reforms are desirable: the old "charity" organisation arguments against coddling the poor are barely heard. The Charity Organisation Society itself—so are the winds of doctrine blowing a different way—has extended a hearty welcome to the Report. There is no audible case against it, beyond this assertion that the country may, when the war is over, find itself too poor.

Such a contention would be too fantastically silly to be taken seriously if the sole question were whether the country will be able to afford the £86 millions which represent the *maximum* additional charge on the National Exchequer at the start of the plan, or even if the extra £50 millions or so chargeable to employers is taken into account. This is not the basis on which the financial critics of the Plan rest their case. Their contention is that we cannot tell how much the country will be able to afford for Social Security until we have seen how much it is to be called upon to find for other things—for housing, for education, for armaments and perhaps national military service, for subsidies to industry and agriculture during the period of reconstruction, and so on. Let us have all the plans before us first—so runs the argument—and then we shall be better able to tell how much of each we shall be able to afford. That seems to be the "Treasury view," stated with a remarkable lack of finesse by Sir Kingsley Wood last week; and that is the view which Sir Arnold Gridley put forward in the speech in which he nominally seconded but really opposed Mr. Arthur Greenwood's ill-worded motion.

How much substance is there in this plea of prospective poverty? The first thing to notice about it is that it is not based on any assertion of an absolute deficiency of total productive power. No one appears to argue that as a result of the war there is likely to be a decline in British productive capacity, at any rate beyond a quite short period of adjustment from war to peace. That being the case, the argument that Great Britain cannot afford a good deal in the way of social reform designed to raise the standard of life of the poorer sections of the people is manifestly inconsistent with Sir William Beveridge's opening assumption of "full employment." If we get "full employment" we shall evidently get high production as well; and what else is high production than being richer, and therefore able to afford more? The opponents of commitments to post-war expenditure on plea of poverty are in effect assuming the continuance of mass unemployment. They are denying the validity of Sir William's primary assumption, for poverty and unemployment quite plainly go together.

In effect, what the critics are saying (in so far as they are advancing a reasoned case and not merely venting their unreasoned prejudices and presuppositions) is that a higher standard of life for the very poor means a larger demand for *imports*, and that Great Britain will not be able to afford these imports because British firms will not be able to sell enough exports to pay for them. It will be a difficult job to pay out of current exports for the imports that will be needed after the war; and if it is assumed that imports are to be allowed to come in freely in unlimited amount, irrespective of our ability to pay for them with exports, there will be no alternative to depressing British standards of living for the purpose of keeping the demand for imports down. This, however, is surely an erroneous line of argument; what it means is that because, under conditions of free importation, a rising standard of living would involve a severe pressure on the foreign exchanges, Great Britain is therefore to refrain from producing at home the goods which can be produced here so as to raise the standard of life. The correct conclusion is that it may be necessary after the war to restrict total imports within our capacity to pay for them, but that we must on no account allow the fear of pressure on the foreign exchanges to prevent us from making the fullest use of our productive resources—that is, from following a policy of "full employment" at home. To accept the alternative view is to fall back into the old error of regarding deflation as the correct remedy for an unbalanced position in the foreign exchanges, and of accepting mass-unemployment as forced upon us by the exigencies of "sound finance." It is the old attitude of the "Geddes Axe" of 1921, the May Committee of 1931, the "gold standard" mentality of 1925, with the phrases altered but the underlying ideas utterly unchanged.

The correct view is that we can afford anything that is within the limits of our productive capacity, though we may have in proportion to the world's unwillingness to buy more of our exports, to produce more at home of goods which, if we could sell more exports, it would be preferable to import. Within these limits, which are wide, there is no valid reason against our affording anything that we feel like affording on grounds of social justice or improvement in the arts of living. Indeed, there is every reason for affording all we can within these limits; the more we afford the less unemployment and waste of resources there will be.

Here, however, we come up against the second defence line of the opponents of the Beveridge Plan—that we can afford social reforms only at the cost of keeping taxation high, and that this really means that we cannot afford them, because high taxation will destroy enterprise, and so make us again too poor. This, of course, is in effect saying that if the rich are not allowed to keep big profits they will refuse to employ the poor, and the unemployment thus arising will make the country too poor to relieve their poverty. It is the mass-unemployment argument in another form; for, as we have said, "full employment" and poverty cannot go together. The answer must surely be that, if the rich really argue that the continuance of capitalism depends on keeping the poor poor, it is capitalism that will have to go. This line of argument is an exceedingly dangerous one for the Government to lend any countenance to: it is a plain invitation to the class war, under conditions which will rally every decent citizen to the cause of the poor.

Moreover, in its application to the Beveridge Report, the argument is singularly inapposite. The critics talk as if Sir William were proposing a vast transfer of purchasing power from the rich to the poor. Actually, he is doing nothing of the sort—indeed, he is doing much less in this respect, as far as the near future is concerned, than he might well have done. Of the £265 millions which is the additional cost of his Plan at the outset over the cost of present services, £125 millions, or nearly half, is to be levied directly in the form of additional contributions from the insured; £54 millions is to be levied on firms, and will be passed on, at any rate in part, to the consumers in higher prices; £86 millions is to come from the Exchequer and from local rates; and no one can suppose that the whole of the £86 millions will fall on the rich. Where it falls will depend on the post-war systems of national and local taxation; but it is safe to assume that most of it will have to be met by the working and middle classes. If we say that in all three-quarters of the burden is likely to fall on the insured classes, excluding the rich, we shall certainly not be exaggerating. It is plain nonsense to suggest that a transfer on the scale proposed will dry up the springs of enterprise.

Nor, of course, does anyone seriously suppose that it will. The springs of enterprise are being dried up, not by Social Security measures, which are, on the contrary, favourable to them, as enlarging the outlet for consumers' goods, but by the growth and pervasiveness of capitalist defeatism and restrictive monopoly. The need for the State to intervene actively in industry in order to secure and maintain "full employment" arises not because of high taxation but because capitalism prefers to attempt profit-maintenance by means of restriction to adopting a venturous policy of expansion. Opinions may differ about the degree of blame to be assigned to the capitalists. The fact itself is undeniable, and the only possible conclusion is that the State, by measures of real investment as well as by the direction of banking policy to prevent defeatist deflation, must make itself responsible for maintaining the level of employment. Given this, Great Britain can afford not only the Beveridge Plan in full, but also advanced measures in education, housing and town-planning, and the development of those important social services with which the Beveridge Report was not concerned.

MOSCOW AND THE POLISH GOVERNMENT

[*Cabled by our own correspondent in Moscow*]

It is significant of the immense success of the sweeping Russian offensive across the Ukraine and of the deep confidence that the process will continue that the Russian press should have raised in such a sharp form, through Alexander Korneichuk's article, the question of Polish claims on Ukrainian and other non-Polish territories. They refer to the megalomaniac ideas of certain incorrigible Poles for whom a Polish outlet to the Baltic is not enough; they want a Black Sea outlet, too. As one Russian friend said to me, "The Czechs don't claim an outlet to either sea. If they claimed an outlet to one, absurd as it would be, it would still be more reasonable than the Polish claim to the Black Sea." Korneichuk is an eminent Ukrainian with immense authority in the Soviet Union, especially since he wrote *Front*. His views carry a weight that few other Russian writers carry, and his article attacking certain London Poles may be regarded as a reflection of particularly influential views in the Soviet Union. The truth is that the Russians have been increasingly fed up with certain attitudes of those *Szlachta* or landed gentry circles, who are giving the tone to so much that is written and said in circles around and about the Polish Government in London. There is a suggestion in Korneichuk's article that they are abusing British hospitality, when they print on English paper scurrilous attacks on the Soviet Union. These people, Korneichuk says, are doing their best to shake good Anglo-Soviet relations.

What he quotes from the Polish London papers is certainly pretty devastating. While the Polish people are suffering all the horrors of German occupation certain Polish writers in London even express the view that there is really no hurry about their liberation because such quick liberation could only come as the result of a Russian victory. Such a victory must not be accelerated. Therefore, not for technical military reasons, but for political reasons, certain London Poles were against the early opening of a Second Front. Last September *Mysl Polska* said that such opening of a Second Front would not be in the Polish national interest. The same paper, as quoted by Korneichuk, says "The U.S.S.R. is not a European country at all, it is a Eurasian country." There were many more quotations giving similar views. To say the least, Korneichuk considers it highly ungracious that certain Poles should talk as if they feared a Soviet victory at a time when the Russians and Ukrainians are sacrificing their lives in the liberation of the Ukraine (the whole Ukraine) and indirectly in the liberation of the unhappy Polish people—and in Poland where the terror flared up with horrible intensity so that every extra day of German occupation means hundreds or thousands more dead.

The truth is that these people round the Polish

Government in London represent nothing but narrow class interests and greedy musical-comedy Polish imperialism. The welfare and salvation of the Polish people by means of a quick Russian victory is something that doesn't rejoice but terrifies them. But Korneichuk is a Ukrainian, and the Ukraine is his chief concern. "Hands off the Ukraine" is Korneichuk's main theme; also hands off Belorussia, large slices of which, well beyond the Curzon line, were without rhyme or reason included in the inflated Polish State under the Riga Peace Treaty. Russia refuses to allow any repetition of injustices which were imposed on her brother races at a time when she was militarily very weak. Actually there is nothing new in this rejection of the Polish claims to 1939 frontiers; when in the summer of 1941 that claim was made in a broadcast by Sikorsky *Pravda* responded sharply. But it is interesting that the Soviet press should now take up the question again. The case made out by Korneichuk about the Ukrainian city Lvov with its enormous number of unemployed and prostitutes before the Red Army came, and the prosperity, education, medical services and land reform of the South-West Ukraine brought to the population, may, especially in the Polish view, sound somewhat one-sided. There were people, Poles, who suffered from that occupation, but from the Ukrainian standpoint it was unquestionably an immense improvement compared with what the Ukrainians experienced under Polish rule. There is no need to look up Russian sources on the question of Polish handling of the Ukrainian minority. Frederick Voigt in the days when he was the great *Manchester Guardian* correspondent and not the apocalyptic anti-Bolshevik, who during the Finnish war wanted us to take on Russia as well as Germany (pretty fix we'd be in), and who, I imagine, greatly sympathises with the Polish scribes now in London—wrote some of his finest pieces reporting his investigation from the Polish Ukraine.

The terror against the Ukrainians which was carried out systematically by the Poles was small compared with the super-horrors that the Nazis have been perpetrating in Poland during the last three and a half years, but it was an immensely impressive job of national oppression according to 1931–32 standards. Korneichuk states clearly the claim of the whole of the Ukrainian peoples to self-determination, especially after their liberation by the Red Army with its enormous proportion of Ukrainians. Beyond the least doubt they will want one thing only—to be a member of the Soviet Union. The British Government has made it plain that it will not guarantee any of the Polish Eastern frontiers, and therefore the Russians do not in any way consider this as a quarrel with Britain, where everybody in authority tends to attribute all this Polish barking up the wrong tree to the charming but irresponsible Polish "temperament." But the Polish attitude is regrettable nevertheless, especially during the present time, when the Poles should realise that the Soviet Union will almost inevitably be the most powerful State in Eastern Europe, and Poland can gain nothing out of this "temperamental" bickering. The Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe is inevitable, and no reasonable Pole can suppose that Britain will raise a finger to install Polish Peyroutons. The Poles themselves, if they are sane, would not want any new Chamberlain-like British guarantees to Poland with an antagonised Russia left outside.

BRISTOL AFTERTHOUGHTS

BY-ELECTIONS are taken, at least in Government circles and the London Press, as indications of public opinion; so far as I'm concerned, this theory was shattered to bits by a flying visit to Bristol on the eve of the poll. Bristol, in spite of press reports, seemed far from election-conscious; the result seemed far from a mirror of public opinion. True, a one-man two-day Mass Observation may be mistrusted by the Harrisson Union, and I can't pretend to have seen more than two eyes could see or two trudging feet could follow. But I'm pretty sure that the Bristol election justifies two questions—first, should elections be held at all in wartime, when young people are away and the register is hopelessly out of date; second, are usual election methods blunted and nullified by the immense advances made by war propaganda in film, press, poster and radio?

Take the set-up for Bristol. First, a shattered town, so shattered, indeed, that, walking in moonlight, one might have fancied oneself at Pompeii; and shattered mainly in its prosperous business quarters. Second, four candidates confusingly overlapping each other: Lady Apsley standing for the Tory Party, war, and, I think it must be admitted, reaction; Jennie Lee for war, Mr. Churchill (but not the Tory Party), and intelligent socialism; MacNair standing for the underdog, the workers, a "people's government," and war as perhaps inevitable but distressing; Dunn standing, according to posters, for "the man in the street," but generally, one gathered, for business large or small, and particularly for Dunn's business. Third, a register from which nearly two-thirds of the electors had disappeared owing to blitz, fighting, or war work. Fourth, a city which has a surprising number of young people, but nobody under 25 with a vote. Fifth, the expulsion of seven Labour councillors for daring—Heaven help us!—to refuse to vote for a Conservative. Sixth, the Beveridge debate on the eve of the poll, telling heavily, one would think, against the Government. Seventh, the noisy backwash of a Swansea air raid, telling in favour of Mr. Churchill.

All this, you'd think, might have excited Bristol. Not at all. All Tuesday evening I pub-crawled zealously and, in the end, so intoxicatingly that I wasn't sure whether I was in Pompeii or not; but never one word did I hear of the election. I had to start the topic myself, and it invariably died on me. "Lady Apsley would get in." "Why?" "Oh, well, she was *known*: Bristol didn't like strangers." "She worked on committees." "*He* had been known." "She was gallant." "It was a dull election, anyway." "Elections shouldn't be held in wartime." And the conversation drifted away to trade and personal war experiences and air raids and gossip. Stumbling past moonlit ruins, I noted that Bristol cinemas were crowded to capacity, while political meetings, held on that Tuesday evening in small scattered parish halls, attracted only what seemed a converted few: very few. Where was democracy? In the cinemas.

On Wednesday I canvassed with various groups, and a hangover. The doors were opened, always without exception, by elderly people, who took our leaflets with a polite smile and ventured no opinion. On the very rare occasions when words were uttered, they seemed (or perhaps I just happened to catch them) to be oddly unpolitical. "Was Jennie Lee married?" "Yes? Then why did she call herself by her maiden name?" "Did she wear a wedding-ring?" "Why wasn't her husband in the Forces?" A film-star quality which endeared Jennie Lee to the young appeared to work fiercely against her in the home.

I doubt very much whether a stranger in Bristol on Wednesday afternoon would have known that an election was on. A loud-speaker barked occasionally and unintelligibly from a passing car; there were a few posters if you looked for them purposefully; Jennie Lee's rally at the Colston Hall, Maxton and MacNair at the Kingsley Hall, Lady Apsley at the Temple Colston School, were advertised in the local press, but not so as you'd notice them more than—or as much as—the film bills. You had to look for them.

Luckily for me the meetings were staggered. At six I went to hear Maxton; he didn't turn up; his telegram, stating that the Beveridge Report had detained him, was read to us. Still, he *had* been advertised; and the Kingsley Hall, with an austere and hard-seated capacity of some 250, got a total audience of 23. We had some good earnest speeches; the 23 were obviously of the faithful; it was dull. I hurried through Pompeii—thank God for the moon!—to the Colston Hall. Here was a sharp contrast: organ and community singing, an audience of 2,000, warmth and light and luxurious fauteuils into which a tired trudger gratefully sank, and a whole array of footlit celebrities on the banner-decked platform. Brilliant demagogic fireworks came from Michael Foot; Tom Wintringham, fresh from Midlothian and tremendously applauded, gave an endearing display of modesty and good sense and telling phrase; Horabin, M.P., declared that Jennie "stood for the working-class." Looking to right and to left, behind and before, I must state in the interests of truth that I could find nobody resembling that description: it was a strikingly sleek crowd. But maybe I am unfair; it was at any rate a young crowd; and do I know, I asked myself, what "the working class" means to-day? Undoubtedly everyone was enjoying himself; it was nearly as good as a cinema. It was perhaps almost too much like a cinema; there were no interruptions, no heckling. And as I left, shortly before the end, I noted a young man in a raincoat and dirty white sweater who was also leaving, and whose ironical smile and faint whistle of derision seemed to indicate that he was unimpressed by the fauteuils and the footlights. He was more, I thought, like the class for which Jennie, according to Horabin, stood, than anyone else I had seen; but had I stopped to question him I should have missed Lady Apsley; that's the devil of one-man mass observation. I don't want to make too much of this, but it's an essential piece of reporting, nevertheless, because the danger of too much facile demagogy is a real one. I had the impression that the audience here were middle-class, pseudo-intellectual, easily lulled; and that the tougher young, when they came to vote, would distrust footlights and fauteuils and slick talk. But it's only fair to add to this that Jennie Lee talked sense, that she undoubtedly seemed to represent the hope and faith of youth more than any other candidate; it's only fair to record, too, that she had courageously made an open-air speech that afternoon in the Horsefair to an audience of myself, her agent, and one scrubby tramp, while the democratic inhabitants of Bristol passed heedlessly on their lawful occasions on the other side of the road.

Lady Apsley was speaking in a school. It might have seated 100. The white bulbs glared down on school benches and stools. The audience numbered 18. Oh! for the pen of a Balzac to describe the reverent rising of the 18 as the cripple's chair was wheeled in. Nobody could dislike Lady Apsley; few could fail to sympathise with her bereavement and her gallantry; but what has that to do with politics? I steeled my heart against it as obstinately as other parts of me were steeled against the school stool. The chairman, long, lean, aristocratic, told us that here was Lady Apsley to win the war for us. Lady Apsley, half-raising herself from the chair with apparent pain—we all, I think, wanted to say hastily, "Please don't bother to do that"—addressed us. She spoke with frequent italics. If we returned her, it would be her *main*, her *constant*, almost, she might say, her *only* endeavour to support Mr. Churchill. There was talk in this election of *post-war* issues, but the main thing was to *win* the war. After the war she thought we must have more *overseas* trade, and more *production*, and what was called the *sterling* group must keep together, so as to have *basic* raw materials, and our bases mustn't be like *Malaya*, which fell, in a few weeks, they must be *quite* impregnable, not *against* other nations, of course, but to *safeguard* our *trade*. And our foreign affairs must be in *experienced* hands. "Any questions?" said the chairman, menacingly. Yes, there were. Out of the 18 three were young, and they each had something to say. Was Lady Apsley in favour of blood-sports? Consultation with chairman. She didn't understand what was *meant* by blood-sports. She *was* in favour of field-sports. Did that mean that she was in favour of hunting foxes? Yes—it was kinder, because if you shot at foxes you sometimes *missed* them, and then the fox died of hunger. Here the chairman intervened, and said t this was off the point; were there any more stions? Yes. Was Lady Apsley in favour of really international police force after the war? nsultation. She thought you could *hardly* ing in the *enemy* nations. The questioner per- sted—but the Germans wouldn't like being liced by us? "They damned well will be," said well-dressed gentleman who had come with dy Apsley. "Any more questions?" said the airman. Yes. What did Lady Apsley think out disability pension being 37*s.* 6*d.* a week, as inst 40*s.* after the last war? This was a question hich had agitated previous meetings, and Lady psley was ready for it. That was because, you , the cost of living was *lower* now. But did dy Apsley think that 37*s.* 6*d.* was a decent ward for total disability? Well, you see, they ust have *jobs*; they got the 37*s.* 6*d.* just the me when they *had* a job; for instance, they uld become *telephonists*; she herself knew, from r own disability, how *necessary* it was to have a b. And the chairman said that Lady Apsley ust now go to another meeting; we stood up the wheeled chair was wheeled out.

Was Bristol's result a sign of public opinion? was, perhaps, a sign of elderly opinion; it was so a sign of apathy. Of the 41,000 electorate, ,000 voted. Churchill, doubtless, is a magic me; but had the 25–35 age group not been away hting, and had the under-25's had a vote, the sult would certainly have been different. Jennie e, I think, would have succeeded, as Tom intringham so nearly did in Midlothian; the arrow defeat in each case would have been hanged into victory by the young. But can such change occur until the war is over and the young turn? In the meantime the forces of reaction e enthroned by narrow margins: the total votes st in the four by-elections—King's Lynn, idlothian, Portsmouth and Bristol—were 34,918 r the Conservatives and 28,631 for Common ealth or Independent candidates. The Tory achine is, no doubt, still strong; but on the howing of these figures Conservative candidates epresent only a little more than half of an elderly e-third of the electors. Democracy? Well——

LIONEL FIELDEN

A LONDON DIARY

THIS week I have been trying to thread may way hrough the complexities of the Beveridge tangle. find some people in the know on the Government ide half angry and half incredulous. They say hat there is no doubt at all that the Government s fully committed to large parts of the Beveridge cheme, and that negotiations for putting ome of them into administrative shape have egun. They say that Ministers know that the roblems tackled in the Beveridge Report cannot e ignored; there will have, for instance, to be a evision of pensions and reconsideration of enefit. Sir William actually offered a cheap olution of the inescapable. In that case, I ask, hy did Anderson and Kingsley Wood manage o to put the Government case in the first two ays of the debate as to persuade almost everyone hat the scheme was substantially rejected? nstead of taking credit for a great social reform, hy use the stock procrastinator's arguments?

* * *

Perhaps the truth is that Sir Kingsley Wood isrepresented the Cabinet and actually represented Conservative Central Office and some Treasury officials? In that case the Labour evolt must have been beneficial. The Government ave had a most useful shock. To which there is he added complication that some Conservatives ertainly want to throw Labour out of the Coali- ion on the grounds, particularly, that Ernest Bevin has won too much for trade unionism uring the war, while a number of Labour Members also want to bring the Labour Ministers ut of the Government on the general prin- iples that Socialists should not be smirched with the dirt of hesitations over Beveridge and Darlanism in Europe.

An experienced Labour M.P. inveighed bitterly against this rebellious Labour psychology. He declared that if this kind of vote, which he admitted had been useful in bringing pressure to bear over the Beveridge scheme, were to become of frequent occurrence it would play straight into Tory hands. Labour would be falling into a trap. An election sprung on the country before the end of the war would be just what the Die-hards would like. Winston would have all the cards in his hands, and the situation would be unpleasantly like 1931—the radio and the press would be used to suggest that Labour was running away on the eve of great events (he thought the Second Front would really come some time), and that Winston could use his prestige to scrub Labour almost off the political map. Against this I hear other Labour politicians argue that Beveridge was the best issue Labour could ever have, that none of the really big issues of post-war Europe are electorally possible, and that those who are afraid to stake their political lives can achieve nothing. It was better in the long run to fight on a straight progressive issue than to remain prisoners, waiting the usual fate of Social Democrats.

* * *

My own summary would be something like this: If Morrison and Bevin are not really capable of doing anything inside the Government, and if they would fight for Socialism outside it, then it would be clearly better for them to come out and look like an alternative Government on the Opposition Bench. But if it is true that on domestic issues they can accomplish something substantial inside the Government, and if, in spite of Wood's speech, the Government can be induced by pressure to do more, then the best thing for the present is to form a watchful and determined opposition group which can make the Government see to it that it does not slip out of its hesitating commitments.

* * *

The Government is making up now for any lack of recognition of the Red Army in the past. Listening on the wireless to the Albert Hall pageant, I thought that, once we had got over the pathetically unconvincing prologue, the description by Michael Standing was very effective. (I'm told the overdramatised shouting at the beginning did no harm because the Russians thought it an old British custom, and the British assumed it was Russian.) Mr. Eden's speech contained a smaller percentage of clichés and a higher percentage of sense than one could have expected on such a very ceremonial occasion. How many people are there in England to-day of any party who could have conceived eighteen months ago of a day when the armed services of Britain would parade in the Albert Hall to pay homage to the Red Army? This recognition of Anglo-Soviet partnership is good. But the real issues are still unbroached. The military virtues, for which Russia is now properly praised, have nothing much to do with Socialism, and can be praised by the bitterest opponents of Socialism. The problems of post-war collaboration, of overcoming the isolationism in which all countries, including Russia, seek safety, when international difficulties seem great, are quite untouched.

* * *

A friend writes: I sat in Peterborough Cathedral on Sunday and admired its engineering, made visible to the eye by the depredations of the Puritans. There are three tiers of superimposed Norman arches, and in the middle, an eighty-foot arch stout enough to take the thrust of a whacking great tower—as indeed it did till about 1890, when it had to be rebuilt. And no dull notion of utility about it, the whole terrific structure made just for fun, just for glory, the greater glory of God—and, of course, of the Abbot. What would the young Russians think of it? I was wondering, when there smote my astonished ear, "Let us give thanks to God for the glorious Russian victories, and especially for the relief of Leningrad and Stalingrad and for the recapture of Rostov and Kharkov." Times have changed, indeed, and those prayers in an English cathedral were probably more impressive and even more surprising than the choirs in the Albert Hall. Not inappropriate, either. The Normans who built those arches were also great warriors, full of drive and self-confidence. They, too, imposed a structure by force; there remained the task of discovering the value of toleration and the virtues that are easily forgotten in victory.

* * *

Vera Brittain has written a moving as well as a factual pamphlet (*One of These Little Ones*, Dakers, 4*d.*) urging us all to do what we can to persuade the Government to agree to the dispatch of certain forms of famine relief to occupied Europe. This proposal has nothing to do with "breaking the blockade." In fact the food that has been sent to starving Greece and the American relief that was allowed in unoccupied France have not in any way impeded the war; relief is carried on under the strictest rules, sent in neutral ships that could not otherwise be used, and is given to children in addition to the ration that they would get anyway. The scheme is not in any way tainted with the political dubieties of the Hoover scheme, 1940–1. Therefore the Nazis gain nothing and we gain a great deal. First we are relieved, if we have any conscience or imagination, from some of the misery of knowing that we are starving Europe; we are creating a volume of gratitude that may be invaluable in the future; we are saving from death or the apathy that precedes it many who may be our allies, and we are doing the most practical possible form of political warfare by showing that the Nazi regime means starvation, while the arrival of the Allies means salvation.

* * *

Eire, according to a friend of mine who has just returned, has changed little since I described conditions there a year ago. "It is still comparatively a land of plenty. The streets are paved with meat and flowing with wine, although no longer with milk, butter and honey. Sherry, in particular, is plentiful and good. On the other hand there is little tea and coal is so scarce that in the smaller hotels everybody has to have breakfast at the same time, as there is only enough fuel for one cooking.

"Nobody seems to take the Government seriously. 'Och, they are only a lot of playboys'; but they take de Valera very seriously indeed. Although, according to the Constitution, a Prime Minister, in the hearts of the people he is more akin to a Führer. Four out of five Irishmen are sincerely grateful to him for keeping them out of war. The attitude to the war is, in the last degree, ambiguous. The traditional hatred of the British expresses itself in delight at our discomfitures; at the same time there is a wholesome fear of Nazi Germany. 'Thank God the English devils are beat at last,' said my friend's gardener in the autumn of 1940. 'But what shall we do if the Nazis come?' asked my friend. 'Och, shure, the British Navy won't let 'em.'" If the conversation is not true, it is at any rate an authentic effort by Mr. Benjamin Trovato.

* * *

"Now they see which way the cat is jumping some of the Irish begin to feel a certain amount of apprehension as to their position after the war. Where, for example, is Ireland to figure on the scale of economic priorities? But they do not seem to regard the prospect very seriously. When taxed, they assure you that with a little more intensive cultivation, Ireland after the war can become wholly self-supporting, so there is no need to worry. Meanwhile, they are preoccupied with their own politics, and England figures in their thoughts only when they wish to capitalise the wrongs of the past. 'Partition' still dominates every political conversation, for the Irish, it seems, can never forget the Six Counties. (America is unpopular at the moment because, by landing troops in Northern Ireland, she is considered to have affronted Irish neutrality.) I was asked to take the chair at a students' debate on the motion, 'That Ireland's only hope for national unity lies in a German victory.' The general effect is one of unreality. In retrospect Ireland looks like a brilliantly lit scene on a musical comedy stage, viewed through the wrong end of a pair of opera glasses where brightly clad figures gesticulate their way through floods of talk about the man in the moon."

CRITIC

DECLINE AND FALL

"We want . . . greatly improved consular services, equipped not only to analyse markets abroad . . . but ready to collaborate with industry's representatives and customers on the spot."—Mr. H. Morrison, February 14th.

OUR envoys may no longer shine,
Heirs to a diplomatic line
And proud tradition.
His Excellency's beams are shorn,
His wasted talents must adorn
A business mission;
Renouncing his Imperial creed
He barters with the lesser breed.

Democracy's Ambassador
For export trade need be no more
A titled person.
O phantoms of a vanished day!
O Crewe! O Salisbury! O Grey!
O shade of Curzon!
It is a task no longer ours
To hold the scales between the Powers.

Can we past influence renew
With sovereignties allergic to
Our world examples?
No more. Once arbiter of kings,
To-day His Excellency brings
A case of samples.
Othello's occupation's gone
But customers are waited on.

The tactics of the tête-à-tête,
Skill in manoeuvres delicate
And confidential,
The exercise of brilliant tact,
The technique of the secret pact
Are not essential.
Compelled his courtly rôle to drop
His Excellency keeps a shop.

No more by methods indirect
Can he great powers or small infect
With Anglomania.
Farewell the old diplomacy!
Farewell finesse a long good-bye
To Ruritania.
Gone with the wind his past prestige,
He stoops to trade. *Noblesse oblige!*

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to R. W. Browne.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Hypnotism and psychology are twin brothers. That is why we claim that the birch rod will have a more steadying effect than all the juvenile courts ever instituted.—*Stirling Journal and Advertiser.*

The richest cat in the world, the ginger one which (as reported in last week's *Sunday Dispatch*) was left £4,000 by his owner, Mr. Alfred Sadler, a recluse, still cannot be traced.—*Sunday Dispatch.*

The programme includes a SAD and HEART-RENDING tale of an EARNEST young pacifist (it might be you!) and many other diversions. Admission by programme from 8 Endsleigh Gardens.—Advert. in *Peace News.*

This little book . . . is intended for the girl of fairly wealthy circumstances—one of whose domestic help consists of at least two maids. She is expected to be leading a life in which hunting, winter sports and many social engagements are a recognised feature.—Book review from *Stationery Trade Review.*

LORD OLIVIER

THE first time I ever heard of Lord Olivier was many years ago, when I was still quite a young man and he was already high up in the Colonial Service. It must have been in the early years of the present century. I read a paragraph in a daily paper which described how the distinguished colonial civil servant, Sydney Olivier, cleaned with his own hands the windows of his house in Hampstead—I think it was Hampstead—and the reason which the newspaper gave for this unheard-of performance was that Sydney Olivier of the Colonial Office was a Socialist. The statement was characteristic of the English journalist's view of Socialism forty years ago or perhaps even to-day. It was true that Sydney Olivier was a Socialist in 1880, in 1900, and in 1920, and he was still a Socialist in 1943, when he died. It is quite possible that he cleaned his own windows himself; it was the kind of thing he might well do. But he certainly did not clean his own windows because he believed in Socialism, and it is no part of Socialism that we should all clean our windows ourselves.

The last time I heard of Olivier was two days before his death. I received a letter from him, and he had rather characteristically sent it to the wrong address. The letter itself, too, was characteristic. I had asked him to come and meet a Colonial Governor. He refused on the ground that this Colonial Governor was a very clever man who had never said a foolish thing, but had never done a wise one. He then went on to write about the conditions in the West Indies. He said that the curse of the West Indies had been the alienation of the land to large private landowners, and that the islands will not be prosperous unless and until this private ownership of land is done away with and the land is made available for the workers to grow their own food on.

This letter is, as I say, characteristic of Olivier. It shows that at the age of 80 and more, within a few days of his death, he was still a Socialist, still thinking of the West Indies and its difficulties and problems, still impatient with the foolish cleverness of politicians, still expressing what he thought to be true without any regard of his own interests and not much regard for the feelings of his opponents.

I cannot speak with personal knowledge of Olivier in his prime. He was over 60 when I first got to know him. His colonial career was then over, and he was a prominent member of the Labour Party and holding high office in Labour Governments. But he was one of those rare people who never grow old. He was also, I think, the very best type of Englishman. He was not, in fact, eccentric, but he had in him the stuff of which the eccentric Englishman is made, and in my opinion one of the greatest glories of the English or British tradition or way of life is that for hundreds of years it has produced the eccentric Englishman, the Englishman who is most English because he is not like any other Englishman, who is only like himself. He has his own views on every conceivable subject, and he likes other people to have their own and different views on those subjects; he expresses his own views, in and out of season, bluntly, not to say violently, and he is willing for other people to do the same; he lives his own life in his own way and, if he wants to clean his own windows—even if he is a high official of the Colonial Office—he does so quite simply, without regard to the usual customs and conventions of society. These people are the antithesis of the machine-made, rubber-stamped products of Nazism or Fascism. Olivier was one of them, and he would have been the first person to be haled off to a concentration camp if Fascism had ever come to Britain. And as the Gestapo men haled him away, we should have heard him expressing his opinion of them and Fascism, clearly, kindly, and with considerable vehemence.

Olivier came from the public school-Oxford class. He was a man of very considerable intellectual power. He passed into the Civil Service at the top of the list in the competitive examina-

tion, and no one can do that without considerable brain power. He was already in the eighties of last century a prominent Fabian Socialist. To be a Socialist and at the same time a civil servant, particularly a colonial civil servant, sixty years ago, was a remarkable, not to say an eccentric combination. To succeed in the Colonial Civil Service, to become the Governor of a Colony, and to remain a Socialist, not merely in theory and academically, but in word and deed, as Olivier did, was an extraordinary phenomenon. Olivier's Socialism was both intellectual and emotional; it came from both his head and his heart. His head made him a Fabian; it convinced him intellectually that the complicated economic problems of modern society were insoluble under the existing system, called capitalism, and that they could only be solved by social ownership and control of the means of production. He was never a Marxian Socialist, in the strict sense; he was in this, as in so many things, characteristically English; he was a typical English, Fabian Socialist.

But it was his heart, his emotions, his likes and dislikes which also made him a Socialist, just as they made him a determined democrat, a life-long lover of freedom, an obstinate defender of all under-dogs. That was why all through his official life and throughout his books, he defended liberty and equality, fought against political and economic privilege, and carried on unceasing war against such social evils or crimes, as they appeared to him, as economic exploitation or the colour-bar. This love of freedom and equality was, I say, not merely intellectual; there was nothing doctrinaire about it. It was instinctive in him. It was the thing which made him an eccentric Englishman. It was unthinkable to him that a man should not be allowed to live his own life in his own way, to say what he thought without fear or favour, to clean his own windows if he happened to want to clean his own windows. And he was not one of those who desire to deny to others what he claims for himself. The Asiatic on the plains of Asia or the African in an African swamp or on a West Indian hillside was to him a human being, just a human being with the same kind of mind and body, the same capacities for pain and pleasure, for civilisation or for barbarism, as he himself or any of the people of Wiltshire among whom he lived.

I do not propose to say anything in detail of what Olivier did in his official capacity as Governor of a West Indian Colony. The people of the West Indies know and can appreciate that far better than I can. But I want to say this about him personally, because, unless it is said, one cannot give a true picture of him as a man or properly understand his career and achievements. There was something of the knight-errant in him, a rather curious knight-errant, perhaps even something of Don Quixote. For many years he was a member of a Committee which dealt with colonial problems, and of which I was secretary. These kinds of committees may do good works, but they are dull and dusty proceedings. Olivier by that time was an elderly and distinguished man, a Minister of the Crown, a Secretary of State for India. But he would often blow into the Committee, as it seemed to me, like a breath of fresh air. He was completely without pretentiousness or pomposity, but his physical appearance, his great bulk, his very upright carriage, his good looks, and the vehemence of his words made him a formidable member of a committee. He always had a very definite view of what should or should not be done. As I listened to the torrent of his speech urging this view upon the Committee, I often felt that part of the fire and energy of his advocacy was due to the fact that he was really a knight-errant. He liked to fight against the dragons and the ogres, and the stronger they were the more he enjoyed the fight; it was the weak, the oppressed, the under-dog who appealed to him; he was always eager to put on his armour and sally out to the Colonial Office or the House of Lords, where he could rescue the distressed damsel or even sometimes tilt at windmills.

Old people are nearly always conservative, and those who are most progressive, most to the Left in their youth, are often the most conservative old gentlemen. As we get older the arteries of our body harden, our joints become stiff, and our limbs rheumaticy. But the same thing happens to our minds; the joints of our intelligence stiffen, and the arteries of our thought harden so that we hate change and are terrified by anything new. In fact, about the age of forty we become conservative, even if we were not conservative before that. Olivier was one of those rare persons whose brain never hardened into conservatism. At the age of 80 his mind was as progressive and as open to new ideas as it was when he was 18. He never lost his enthusiasm, for what he thought to be politically right or socially desirable, for liberty, equality and Socialism. I said he reminded me to some extent of Don Quixote. He was like Don Quixote because, as an old man, he was just as eager to go out and fight against evil and injustice and cruelty and sometimes to tilt at windmills—and there is something to be said for the man who sometimes takes a tilt at a windmill—as he was when a callow youth.

LEONARD WOOLF

SMASHERS

I MET a little man the other night, one of the gardeners in a big house in which some soldiers had been billeted for two nights during manœuvres; and he said to me, "Terrible damage they did. They took a chair just like that"—pointing to one of the chairs in the inn—"and smashed it up to light fires. They took the shelves out of cupboards and did the same with them. It wasn't as if it was necessary. There was plenty of firewood in the place."

There is no denying that an unoccupied house makes an extraordinary appeal to the destructive instincts. Small boys feel an irresistible longing to smash the windows. Thieves accept the absence of a tenant as a good reason why they should break and enter and remove any of the fittings and lead piping that previous thieves have left. And even soldiers—the most highly disciplined men, presumably, in any civilised country—are, if half the stories told about billeting are true, frequently tempted to smash anything in the house that there is an excuse for smashing.

Some people may think that the use of furniture as firewood is due merely to laziness; but I cannot believe that even the most indolent man would think it easier to break up a chair than to fetch a few logs from the wood-pile. Most of the stories one has heard suggest that the people who engage in smashing things do so not through indolence but as a delightful form of activity. I am not sure that, if I had been a bolder child and less afraid of the police, I myself could have refrained from smashing the window of an occasional street lamp or a pane now and then in a neighbour's greenhouse. I have done both by misadventure during a game with a hard ball, and, in spite of my terror, the noise made by the breaking glass was stimulating. The only occasion on which I pulled a cricket ball through one of the school windows cost me half a crown, but I think it afforded me more than half a crown's worth of pleasure.

The love of destruction is probably almost as natural as the love of tobacco. People who do not smoke would say that it is more natural. We certainly learn to destroy at an even earlier age than we learn to smoke. How often one has seen a tiny child defacing a wall-paper with meaningless pencil scrawlings! How many excellent illustrated books have had their pictures inked over and their pages torn by the undisciplined denizens of the nursery! This instinct for destruction lasts with a good many people into adolescence and leads to the mutilation of posters on the hoardings. There are many children, too, who take pleasure in knocking down the houses built of wooden bricks by their contemporaries. The ruin of a temple is music in their ears. They are disciples, not of Apollo, but of Apollyon.

There are some who contend that, in behaving like this, the child is learning about the nature of things through experiment, like an ingenious infant who takes a clock to pieces. I doubt this explanation, however. If destructive children are merely educating themselves, how does it come that, as they grow older, they continue to have a heartier appetite for destruction than their less inquisitive contemporaries? The men I used to know who were the best knocker-wrenchers were obviously men who had been experts in destroying things since the first dawn of intelligence. I never met a knocker-wrencher in Belfast or Dublin whom I did not like, but I cannot pretend that any of them by his activities was improving—or had ever improved—his education. Their work was no more educational than that of the men of earlier years who used to put india-rubber in the classroom stove and so destroy for the rest of us the amenities of learning.

We had some astonishing evidence of the continuance of the destructive instinct into later life in an account recently given in the House of Commons by Mr. Noel Baker of what has happened on the Scottish railways during the last three months. More than 2,000 railway carriage windows, he said, had been broken; 1,500 window straps had been torn or cut, 1,000 war-time lampshades had been broken or damaged. And in 1942 more than 43,000 electric bulbs had been broken or stolen from trains in Scotland. During the same period the upholstery in 320 compartments had been cut, 8,600 windows were smashed, and 19,000 window straps were cut. It may be argued that many of the bulbs stolen are evidence of the prevalence of the thieving rather than of the destructive instinct, and that even the window straps may have been taken mainly for the purpose of sharpening razors. But how, on similar lines, can we explain the smashing of nearly 9,000 windows? Even the 43,000 bulbs, we are told, were not worth stealing, since most of the bulbs were useless for household purposes. Still, let us concede that the thieves may have stolen the bulbs under a misapprehension, and may somewhere in their beings have been moved by a desire to make a happy fireside clime for weans and wife. Even so, however, no apology of the kind can be invented for the 8,000 or 9,000 smashed windows. With the best will in the world one cannot take home a smashed railway carriage window to one's weans and wife.

Hence we may as well face the fact that the vandal is not merely a historical character who lived—and disappeared—several centuries ago. The vandals may have disappeared as a race, but their soul keeps marching on, and inspires human beings all over the world to keep alive the spirit of the first practitioners of one of the permanent pleasures of mankind. I cannot help thinking that Cromwell's soldiers must have enjoyed knocking the noses off the figures on tombs, not merely for religious reasons, but, as it were, for the fun of the thing. Did even Savonarola—whom, though I know very little about him, I adore—experience no elation of Apollyonic pleasure in seeing the jewels flung to destruction in the Bonfire of Vanities?

After all, at the Wembley Exhibition one of the most popular stalls was a stall at which for a small sum one was allowed to throw hard balls at crockery and delf ornaments with no other motive than to smash them to pieces. Until recently, at the end of the Eton and Harrow cricket match at Lord's, small boys were allowed to smash tall hats for nothing. We have evidence as strong of the love of destruction for destruction's sake in the way in which, in the early days of the Kingston by-pass, newly planted trees along the route were uprooted and smashed by young men who, whatever their faults, were at least enjoying themselves.

More than one owner of a country estate, having opened his grounds to the public, has been compelled to close them again, not only because of the litter that was left, but because of the general destruction of plants that was one of the amusements of many of the visitors. Even in my own law-abiding city there used to be a notice hung on the lime trees in some of the streets saying: "Please protect what is devoted to your enjoyment." This surely suggests that there is something in the nature of man that makes him long to destroy even the pleasantest things in life, such as trees and birds and butterflies.

No doubt, educationalists and psychologists have told us a great deal about the destructive instinct; but I have not had time to read them. The prevalence of destructiveness that has become increasingly evident since the outbreak of war makes one wonder, however, what the schools, public or otherwise, have been up to in the last fifty years and more that they have done so little to tame the Apollyonic instincts of their nurslings. I cannot believe that their failure is due simply to the prominence given to Greek and Latin studies. I have known many a Greek scholar who would have thought twice before smashing a window in a railway train. Even the ever-growing inroads of science in the curriculum can hardly be blamed for the slashing of upholstery. Obviously, however, schoolmasters have not yet learned the secret of teaching all human beings except imbeciles how to behave in railway trains, or the importance of hesitating before using somebody else's furniture to light a fire.

I do not know the secret myself. Perhaps the best thing would be to hold classes in destructiveness in which boys were allowed to smash things day after day, term after term, till they became as sick of smashing things as of algebra and poetry. Even then, however, it is to be feared that boys would continue for some time to be boys—the worst of all things that boys can be.

Y. Y.

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY

TURGENEV wrote this delightful and well-nigh perfect play, which is now to be seen at the St. James's Theatre, in 1850, when he was thirty-two. It was no doubt his devotion to Mme. Viardot, the opera singer, who was the younger sister of the still more famous Malibran, that led him into writing for the theatre. I cannot find out what sort of a reception *A Month in the Country* first met with, but it was revived with success in 1872 in Petersburg and it is this revised version which Elisaveta Fen has now so well translated and Mr. Emlyn Williams adapted. On that occasion Turgenev refused to come before the curtain on the ground that he did not wish to be considered a dramatist. He was one of those writers who ignore the opinions of the world, favourable or unfavourable, about their work. When Oxford University first offered him a degree he refused, saying that it was absurd—his books were not yet known in England. Still, it is likely that he would have thought it even more foolish of a University to bestow that honour on Mr. P. G. Wodehouse! Four years later he did gratefully accept a degree.

I mention these little episodes because they show his character, which tells in his work also that he was dissatisfied with his plays. As an artist he thought he did better in a form which allowed of a slower tempo than drama. He only wrote one other play of any importance, *The Parasite*.

However, years after its first revival and Turgenev's death, *A Month in the Country* was again performed, this time for a generation which was applauding Chehov at the Moscow Art Theatre. Ever since, it has been recognised as the forerunner of that intimate psychological naturalistic drama in which Chehov excelled, and (*pace* the author) as a little masterpiece. In some respects it gives me more aesthetic satisfaction than even the plays of Chehov, the form of which, however subtly adapted to ends, is perhaps sometimes a little too loose to represent drama at its tip-top best. Or (since in some moods I should want to retract that) let me say that *A Month in the Country*, in addition to possessing some of Chehov's finest qualities, has a suavity and grace peculiar to the conventions, both social and theatrical, of a period that had more sense of form. And then there is its theme.

If a play has truth, harmony and grace, then of all kinds of plays a serious love-comedy is most likely to charm us; and in grace, harmony and truth Turgenev's work excelled. His touch as a writer was always light, rapid, precise; his insight into life was a blend of irony and sympathy. But his irony was never cruel—in this it differed from that of his famous French contemporaries, and he invariably treated love with great respect. He was therefore admirably qualified to write a serious love-comedy. Again, in his stories action was always the consequence of the character, and never directed by a plot or a fable—Chehov's method of construction.

The setting is Chehovian, but this is Russian country-house life in the eighteen-forties, not the eighteen-nineties. The gentry are still sure of themselves. The atmosphere is not yet sultry with self-reproach and sighs after a future when life will be really life. Yet the types are not unlike Chehov's. There is the landowner himself, absorbed in his farming and bothered by peasant incompetence; an honest gentleman this Yslaev, rather unobservant. He leaves fine shades to his wife and his intellectual friend Rakitin. There is the old lady of the house, his mother, who is a slave to cards, not magazines, like her counterpart to come. There is the incompetent local doctor, who earns more meals by his talk than his practice. (How delightfully well Mr. Ronald Squire played him!) Illyich Shpighelska is not an aspiring, intellectual failure, full of self pity, like his counterpart of the Nineties, but a shrewd practical toady, not subservient except by calculation, who knows himself inside out, and is neither surprised nor depressed at what he knows. Then there is a colourless, snuff-taking docile "companion," Lizaveta (a little part, but one worth filling as Miss Hindle filled it), in whom the doctor perceives the makings of a useful wife. Of course there is no question of her refusing, but he wants to make sure that she understands beforehand his requirements, and, since they will always live together, what sort of a man he is: he is not the easy-tempered spritely fellow she has seen at the tables of the rich. This betrothal scene has contrast value in the play. Love may be life—still a silver wedding speaks for itself. Then, there is a poor relation in the house, a ward. Vera is a candid, happy, pretty child of seventeen. I am glad to say that Miss Denham was—quietly and naturally—Vera. She acted particularly well at a moment when she must become suddenly, pathetically, stony; but there is another moment when she might have allowed herself *ferocity* of contempt towards her foster-mother and rival. Of course, this being a mid-nineteenth-century Russian household it includes also a German tutor. (Mr. Schiller wins three well-deserved laughs.) Lastly, there is the beautiful *précieuse* Natalia, Yslaev's wife (Miss Valerie Taylor), her little boy, and another prime character into whom Turgenev put what Mme. Viardot had already made him suffer—Rakitin (Mr. Michael Redgrave), the cultivated friend of the family; the weak, generous, penetrating, wistful adorer of the susceptible but stately Natalia. She has heard the fatal thirty bells (thus they used to speak of a woman's age in those days), but all she knows of love as yet is a dream drawn from gazing into Rakitin's adoring eyes and listening to his conversation. When she did fall in love she did not know what on earth was the matter with her! He knew at once, poor man, and though it excruciated him, he tried to help her, poor thing. The kind and gracious lady found herself suddenly behaving with tortuous meanness; coaxing confidence from a child who regarded her as a mother, in order to snatch from Vera the chance of happiness. No wonder she cries out to Rakitin, "O don't let me despise myself!" The theme might be described as that of Balzac's *Marâtre*, a struggle between a girl and a mature woman for a young man; but if after seeing the play you are satisfied with that, you will have missed the beauty of it. What happens in the heart of Rakitin is just as important.

And how are all these characters set in motion? You remember how in *Uncle Vanya* really only two crucial events take place: the old professor with his beautiful baleful wife Elena arrive and depart, but before they go Vanya's peace of mind, Dr. Astrov's plan of life and Sonya's happiness have been destroyed. Here everything hinges on the arrival and departure of a young tutor (Mr. Tom Gill). Beliaev is the reverse of a Lothario. He doesn't think about women, except perhaps secretly and reverentially. But he is an uncommonly good-looking fellow—more than that, he is very honest, very vital, and very happy. He has no manners, but he behaves nicely because he feels friendly. With Natalia he is clumsy, timid—and she falls in love with him without knowing it. With Vera, he is easy, gay—and she falls in love with him. Even the little maid who liked picking currants for him finds for some reason or other her trusty admirer, the man-servant, has suddenly become distasteful to her. If you think that a young man could not help becoming conscious of the impression he was making, you would be wrong. His unconsciousness was part of his charm. I showed once an old famous man an early photograph of himself. It was that of an extremely vital, handsome youth. He looked at it some time, then said, "*Now* I understand why women sometimes behaved so oddly."

Beliaev is a difficult part. Mr. Gill acts his clumsiness and sincerity, but does not convey that exuberant happiness which I am certain Beliaev possessed. When Natalia tells him that Vera is in love with him and therefore he must leave, he instantly agrees. Then, gathering from his quick assent that poor little Vera had been mistaken when she had supposed he had sometimes shown "a special feeling," Natalia declares her own love. This staggering revelation does make an impression on him, he not only consents to stay, but in the next act puts on his fine clothes. (Here the producer made a mistake; Beliaev should appear not a magnificent dandy, but a workman's son in his clumsy unbecoming best.) Rakitin has no difficulty in convincing him that he is not being true to himself, and that he had better go. Meanwhile Natalia's husband has surprised her sobbing on Rakitin's shoulder, who quite truly admits to his old friend that he loves her. He offers to take himself off, and saves the situation.

As may be inferred, everything depends upon Natalia and Rakitin. I hope, it will be inferred from this notice that those parts must have been well sustained. Indeed, Miss Valerie Taylor was quite admirable whenever she had to be the high-flown or the high-handed lady, but there was not enough desperate abandonment in her gestures when she had to lose her poise. Beneath the *précieuse* Natalia lay a child of nature. Rakitin was intelligently tender, sadly ironical and beautifully considerate—just what he should be; but there are moments in his part too, when he should lose self-control. Notably when Natalia is staring at her tear-stained face in a mirror, thinking doubtless that no one could love such a dishevelled old hag, while he, kneeling beside her, has poured out his selfless devotion. Suddenly, she turns upon him: "I haven't heard a word you said." Then I should have liked to see Mr. Redgrave spring up with a scream or groan (his role as guide, philosopher and friend shattered,) rampage in agony for a minute or two till he could collect himself again. But what a treat the play and its performance were!

DESMOND MACCARTHY

THE MOVIES

"The Circus," at the Tatler

"Algiers," at London Pavilion

"The Navy and the Nation," March of Time

The new films this week are old. *Algiers* cashes in on victory and defeat in North Africa, and is a good thriller of 1938 vintage, with Boyer, Hedy Lamarr and Sigrid Gurie lighting up the native quarter. It compares not badly with *Casablanca*. But no one who has seen *Pepe le Moko*—of which it is a vulgar adaptation—will want to spoil their memories of the original. I recommend instead a visit to the Tatler. That remarkable documentary, *One Day of War*, recently shown at the Regal, comes first in a programme which contains also *The Circus*, not Charlie's but an Alexandrov musical of 1936. Apart from sentimental and melodramatic passages, some of which date amusingly, this film isn't half as bad as the notices have made out. It may be that I am peculiarly susceptible to circus charm, but moments in this film seem to me entrancing with their patchwork of waltz music, spotlights, acrobats, and the bulging faces in the audience. The shot of a dejected "artiste" with her garish poster in the background, is cinema of a high order. During the present slump, the crumbs offered by *The Circus* are by no means to be despised.

The Navy and the Nation, 1943, is one of the most brilliant "March of Time" shorts I have seen. A great variety of material has been packed into the crisp narrative, and one finds again—what seems to have been missing lately from this series—the touches that catch the imagination. The shots of the bombed aircraft-carrier, of the girl worker against a spangled background of factory lights, of curtains blowing in the empty corridor of a destroyer, add magic to exciting fact. The emphasis is on service co-operation and production in factory and shipyard, but a thread of story—the men on a "tin-can" destroyer in search of submarines—holds the material together. This film will be shown at the Empire next week.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Merchant of Venice," at the New Theatre

This play has a natural tendency to come apart, amd Mr. Frederick Valk's performance as the Jew at once disintegrates and decorates the present Old Vic production. His acting has breadth, authority and physical power, qualities so lacking in the rest of the company that the comedy falls into two parts, and becomes a tragedy oddly harnessed to a masque. The Trial Scene fails (as far as it *can* fail) because the gay young people at one side of the court, pulling serious faces for a moment, seem as safe from unhappy endings as figures in a shiny-paper serial: Shylock advances on them from another world, a creature as remote and damned as Caliban. Miss Kay Bannerman as Portia gives an intelligent performance. She cannot dominate Shylock, because she is a featherweight altogether out of his class, but given the limits of a certain style of personality she does extremely well. It is a pity that the producer allowed her so much roguishness with her companions in the early scenes; if Portia is to convince later on, the part needs ballast here. One suspects that Renaissance young women skipped altogether the sub-deb. stage of their development. Mr. Lee Fox made a pleasant Bassanio, with a charm rather too simple for the part; Mr. Noel Willman's Lorenzo could have lent him a little dash. In the small part of the Prince of Aragon Mr. James Pugh acted with assurance and point, and Mr. Andrew Leigh's Lancelot Gobbo was another ripe little performance. The dresses were good, the settings adequate if unexciting but accents of production were curiously lacking; the play needs variation and a sharper focus.

Correspondence

WHIPPING

SIR,—Last Thursday, at question time, Mr. Sorensen was informed by Mr. Amery that between August 9th and November 30th, 958 sentences of whipping were imposed in British India, excluding the United Provinces. Sir Patrick Hannen suggested that questions of this kind on the Order Paper created serious disturbances in India.

Those who know the elementary facts about the history of deterrent punishment, and in particular those who studied the Report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment which unanimously recommended the abolition of the power of the courts to order whipping, know that there is no foundation in fact for the belief in the exceptional deterrent value of flogging. It can no more be justified by expediency than by principles of humanity and justice. In this crisis, Sir Patrick Hannen's question deserves an answer. The truth is that the use of corporal punishment in the British Empire, and especially on the non-British races, is one of the things which disheartens our friends and helps our enemies. The spiritual home of the floggers is on the staff of a Nazi concentration camp, but that will not prevent Lord Haw-Haw from making the most of this extraordinary aberration of British rule in India and other parts of the Empire. Silence in Parliament would aggravate, not hide, the evil.

Cicely M. Craven,
Honorary Secretary
The Howard League for Penal Reform.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Sir,—Mr. Laski, in his admirable article, omits the factor which is producing more anti-Jewish feeling than any other. I refer to the behaviour of foreign Jews in our midst.

There must be many people like myself, who have a real and deep regard for the Jewish people, who respect and admire their intellectual gifts and their loyalty to tradition. We have learnt what valuable contributions they can make to our civilisation, and we are grateful for what Jewry has given to the world of art and letters.

It is, therefore, the more regrettable that at the moment we suffer so deeply from the ill-mannered and unsocial behaviour of a percentage of foreign Jews. It is something that I know to be deplored by their English brothers. Living in Hampstead, I have only too many opportunities for observation. Somehow or other, they continue to have money, and to use it to the detriment of the ordinary English family. If goods are in short supply, they always manage to get them. They clean out the local shops before the worker has time to get there: they flock up to the West End and return with bulging baskets in the rush-hours. They have noisy parties late at night, from which, petrol shortage notwithstanding, their cars depart, engines racing and doors slamming, in the small hours. Worst of all, perhaps, they snap up all available domestic labour by outright bribery, by the payment of fantastic wages and mysterious rations. I speak from past experience.

Now all this is done by a comparatively small number of people, but the repercussions are enormous, and they operate to produce a bitterness which has hitherto been unknown to the English. They are such a noisy minority, these people, that they seem more numerous than they are. Small wonder that anti-Semitism, a disgraceful reaction, is growing at a really frightening rate. This is cruelly unjust to the good, hard-working Jew.

Is there any solution? The cure, if possible, must come from within the Jewish community. Perhaps among the Rabbis some campaign might be started, which would make these weaker brethren realise what result their conduct has. Be that as it may, I merely state what I know to be the case, and something that I myself, together with many others, deeply deplore in the interests of a gifted and kindly people.

Eugenie Fordham

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[We have received several similar letters from people whose opinions deserve serious attention. They are fully alive to the grave political danger of anti-Semitism and are not themselves anti-Semitic. But they charge some sections of the Jewish community with a number of social faults; these, it seems to us, can be summarised by saying that some Jews, particularly in areas where refugees congregate in considerable numbers, have bad, or at least unEnglish manners, behave inconsiderately and selfishly to their neighbours in shops and buses and generally make themselves unwisely conspicuous. Xenophobia easily spreads in wartime. Similar complaints are made about some Americans in this country.—Ed., N.S. & N.]

"THEY"

Sir,—Thank you for "Who Are 'They'?"; we will do well to base our thoughts on this lucid exposition of the dangers and problems which face us and the fears which instead of strengthening our resolve, too often undermine us. Your list of "they's" was almost comprehensive, but not quite. Haven't you a thoughtful word for "we and they" in the Army? "They" are also the men who, consciously or otherwise, damp down the potentially enormous surge of progressive feeling amongst those who have been called away from all the accepted comforts of life to build a better and brighter world for Benns to breed in. I agree entirely with your analysis of the shortcomings of our white-bearded Labour Party, but in spite of their lack of dynamic leadership, the workers in factory and mine, if not in field, have, if they desire, opportunities for clarifying and expressing and unifying their ideas which are not so readily obtainable by the troops. We are given our jobs to do—whether it be to lead a troop of tanks or learn at heart-breaking length how to bring the rifle down smartly to the full length of the left arm, striking it with the right, etc., but those jobs do not include that of thinking or working for political ends. What a weapon "they" have here in time of war! Never was such a perfect opportunity for stultifying brains and suppressing thought. Give the millions a boring life, bags of barrack-square and all incentives to cheap wine, women and song, and make sure that political truths and disturbing theories of social progress are kept well in the background, and one more step is taken towards the passively acquiescent post-war population which is to forget so conveniently, in the sober days of peace, the lessons and objectives which only great struggles like this can clarify.

I am not a grouser or seditious disbeliever in the British Army or its methods. With experience on the field it will be a good army, and by no means all the hours spent in spit and polish will be wasted. Its leadership, its flexibility and its punch are all improving. But politically it will be a dead army—tradition and organisation and environment will make it so. Some influence, great and strong and vital, must work upon us if grumbling and puzzlement and half-expressed doubt are to be converted into purposefulness and canalised into effective action. Who was the traitor among "them" who let in ABCA with its seeds of disaster? Never mind, Sir James is watching with fatherly wisdom and that crack in the traditional structure will be hard to convert into a floodgate.

So please do not neglect this stronghold of "them"; if attacked from within its value to you may be incalculable; otherwise it will bar your way.

In passing, we are provided here with all the best papers—from the *Tatler*, with its moronic full-page photographs to dozens of *Daily Sketches* and *Sunday Dispatches*. No *Herald* or *Worker*, *Reynolds News* or *Chronicle* is to be found within the portals. How comes it, then, that on the table before me as I write is the New Statesman and Nation? Have you, sir, an agent working within? I hope so; we need one.

Cadet

JENNIE LEE AND THE I.L.P.

Sir,—Only a man ignorant of the facts or blinded by narrow political prejudice could write, as does Fenner Brockway in your last week's issue, "No one can complain because the I.L.P. nominated a candidate in Central Bristol." The voting figures make it absolutely plain that the intervention of the I.L.P. effectively "sabotaged" the progressive cause and turned a strong probability of a Socialist win into a comfortable majority for the Tories.

Jennie Lee would have beaten any ordinary Tory political candidate in a straight fight, and the Tories knew it. Their "trump" card was to put up the widow of the former member (a modern "Lady Bountiful" of considerable charm), and use the sentimental value of her bereavement, together with the fact that she was crippled some years ago as a result of a hunting accident, and now has to use a wheeled chair. The Tories left none of their traditional electioneering methods unused. The "high spot" of their campaign occurred on Polling Day, Thursday, February 18th, the very day on which 119 of their Labour "allies" revolted against the Tory massacre of the Beveridge Report. They spent Polling Day parading Lady Apsley round the constituency in an open car, festooned with the national colours, red, white and blue, and preceded by a loudspeaker proclaiming in shameless and stentorian tones, "Vote for Lady Apsley *and the Beveridge Report*." (Sir Samuel Hoare at least had the grace to wait till the 1935 election was over before "doing his stuff" with M. Laval!)

Jennie was defeated by means of a scurrilous campaign of personal and political vilification conducted against her in the working-class districts of the division. We could have "scotched" this campaign if it had come solely or even primarily from the Tories. What beat us was the fact that the I.L.P. waged this campaign with even greater venom and thoroughness than the Tories. In fact, there is ample evidence to show that the I.L.P. candidate so misjudged the electors of Central Bristol as to delude himself into the belief that these ignoble tactics would take him to the top of the poll. Actually, Central Bristol treated him with the indifference which he deserved, but he succeeded in confusing the issues sufficiently to dishearten a good many Socialist workers and voters, and so let the Tory in.

It is probably too much to hope that a £150 penalty and the ignominy of "losing their deposit" will teach the I.L.P. irresponsibles anything. But at least it is likely to teach the electorate to be on its guard against an organisation which so patently plays into Reaction's hands.

Moreover, though the I.L.P. succeeded in preventing a Socialist win in Central Bristol, they could not stop Jennie conducting the finest educational campaign for Socialism which Bristol has had for many years. And the election campaign has brought into contact with one another a grand body of progressive workers who will be invaluable in the future, either as a spearhead to a militant Socialist Labour Party, or if Labour abandons its Socialist principles, as a rallying point for the progressive cause.

R. St. John Reade

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RE-EDUCATION OF GERMANY

Sir,—There is one flaw in Dr. Julian Huxley's discussion of German re-education: he speaks of the enrolment of German youth "on the basis of service." Those who have had long experience in training young people know that the idea of service is of slow growth, and has to be carefully fostered. It is doubtful if there is even a rudimentary conception of the meaning of service amongst those who have been subjected to Nazi training during the past decade. To them a Service Corps would be another version of their own Labour Camps, with the added irritation of a foreign origin. They would simply think of it as the labour imposed on the vanquished by the victor. There is, however, an older and healthier tradition in Germany which suggests a more hopeful way of approach: it may be called the Wandervögel tradition. This has existing associations over here. Before the war parties of members of the Camping Club, the Youth Hostels Association (linking up with the Jugend Herbergen), the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the schools, and so on, camped and hiked in Germany. This offers a ready-made means of bringing boys and girls and young people together in outdoor living under conditions which promote friendliness and good will.

Pressing as the German problem is, we must not let it take precedence over the far stronger claims on us of those nations now suffering under Nazi domination. I can illustrate the conflict of claims by reference to the movement of which I know most—the Boy Scouts. We are a cosmopolitan movement; in 1937 there were Boy Scouts in 45 foreign countries—all training on the same principles; and in that year some 14,000 Boy Scouts of this country camped or hiked on the Continent, including Germany and Austria. At present we are making plans with Scoutmasters now here from occupied countries to revive the movement as soon as their native lands are freed. That is clearly our most obvious duty—to our fellow Scouts, so many of whom have camped with us. Our second duty (the order is one of obligation, not of time) is to take what share we can in the general relief work in ways according to our experience, such as running camps for children, etc. After this we hope to play our part in helping German Youth to free itself from the incubus of Hitlerism. Italy will be less difficult as we have some foundation to work upon; Austria will be even easier, as there was a flourishing Scout movement there before the Anschluss

This Scout policy seems to me to be in miniature a picture of the far vaster field. The occupied countries have the greatest of all claims on our services in helping them to re-establish their own ways of life. In Germany, apart from the influence of the Army of Occupation, such organisations as I have instanced can do their part—not perhaps very large—towards breaking down the Nazi fanaticism. There is no need for yet another organisation; it would only mean more committees, with, of course, a Co-ordinating Committee! Let us build with the material at hand, and link up the past with the future through existing associations; the generous outlook of Youth in its varied organisations will have full scope for expression.

E. E. REYNOLDS,
General Editor, The Boy Scouts' Association

SIR,—Dr. Julian Huxley's striking article on German Education and Re-education contains the pregnant suggestion that there should be an International Youth Service Corps set up to help "in all the odd jobs that are on the fringe of reconstruction," in which young men of all nations could collaborate in common service. I should like to draw the attention of your readers to the experiment made on these lines, now over 20 years old, by the "Service Civil Volontaire International" whose centre is in Switzerland and whose British branch is called "International Voluntary Service for Peace."

Nearly every year before the war, one or more schemes of service were set on foot on the Continent or in this country to repair damage done by flood or avalanche, or to improve a derelict site in a distressed area. The largest such scheme was in Liechtenstein where altogether 700 young men and women were engaged over several months for longer or shorter periods. The farthest afield was in India, where the leader, the great Swiss internationalist, Pierre Ceresole, and other volunteers, helped to build villages after the earthquake in Bihar, and succeeded in securing the support of both Congress and British officials. Nationals of about thirty countries have taken part in one or more services.

We can certainly bear out what Dr. Huxley says as to the educative value of such collaboration in "concrete tasks which are seen to be valuable." I.V.S.P. hopes to play its part in post-armistice reconstruction after the war. It would welcome such an official recognition of the value of this sort of undertaking as Dr. Huxley advocates.

JOHN W. HARVEY,
Chairman

COLONIAL STYLE

SIR,—Sir Herbert Baker's admirable letter shows, if I may say so, that he is indeed a native of the temperate zone; which was my real point, somewhat loosely expressed. As regards Lusaka, it was built by a Dutch architect; as I have always understood, one of Sir Herbert's admirers. The reference to *porte cochère* was due to a memory of a semicircular arrangement of classical columns in front of Government House: this was described as a *porte cochère* in the brochure prepared for the opening ceremony. But it is no use airing particular examples. Sir Herbert would be the first to admit, I am sure, that we do not as yet possess any specific tropical style.

Since there seems to be some interest in this subject may I put forward a brief suggestion? The possibilities of colonial design should be an enticement to any good modern architect; on the other hand, prolonged colonial residence offers little or none to a man faced by the prospects of building in the English field. At the end of the war then perhaps the Imperial Institute or some other agency might send out a small group of young architects on a tour of the main colonial zones. There they would get first-hand information of the technical problems involved, of native styles, of materials, and of colonial conditions. They would find in South Africa a promising school of architecture. On return, they would prepare designs (not necessarily of buildings only) which could then be distributed in the form of a book to all Public Works Departments and other interested bodies throughout the colonial empire. These plans might be ignored or they might lead to a certain uniformity, noted in North Africa by some observers; but they might equally well have some of the effect of the eighteenth-century books of designs. And the idea seems not the most practical way of securing a real revolution in colonial style, doubly important when the 1940 colonial Development Act comes into effective operation, with its no doubt extensive building programmes.

HENRY SWANZY

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

SIR,—I regret that Mr. Gollancz and the Macmillan Company were so ill-served by their advisers; but may I suggest that it is not a case of *quot homines tot sententiae*, but a question of fact? On the instances which I quoted—and I could have quoted many more—either Mr. Browne is wrong, or I am; and it would not be difficult to ascertain which.

Freeland,
74, Holders Hill Road,
Hendon, N.W.4.

MARGARET COLE

ARTHUR MACHEN

SIR,—March 3rd, 1943, will be the eightieth birthday of one of the most distinguished living men of letters, Mr. Arthur Machen. His friends and admirers wish to honour the occasion by a birthday cheque, which will be of practical help to him. Subscriptions should be sent to Colin Summerford, c/o Westminster Bank, 1, Stratford Place, W.1; cheques being payable to the "Arthur Machen Fund," and crossed Westminster Bank (Marylebone).

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SUNDAY THEATRES

SIR,—I have read with interest and entertainment the spirited and pointed reply to Mr. Arundell from Betty Martin and others. Their case does not strike me as "All my eye." It happens that I asked the question at the Conference at the House of Commons "Where does the pressure for Sunday openings originate?" and then remarked that I had received a considerable number of letters from those opposed to such openings, and that the argument in all cases was based on religious grounds. It is a fact that I got no enlightenment.

I have replied to all the letters to the effect that there is much humbug about Sunday work generally, that a rest day once in a week is good for humanity, and that I should welcome further evidence. I await that evidence and, with respect to Mr. Arundell, he provides but little.

The case against opening was put to us M.P.s with undecked firmness and I am sure some of us were impressed by it and the charm of audible elocution.

T. P. H. BEAMISH

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

This is said to be an age of faith, but it gets more and more like an age of pedagogues. Come in from the playground, the private conversations and the fields, put on the school uniform, line up in your classes, wait for the rap of the birch on the table and listen to Miss N. Elizabeth Monroe,* the English mistress, conducting her sharp co-educational hour on the duties of the novelist and the maintenance of human values. "Lawrence, Huxley, Wells, Hemingway, Faulkner—stand in the corner! Farrell and all you proletarians, stop shuffling your feet and muttering! Yes, Joyce, I think you'd better leave the room. Maugham—aren't you ashamed? I can't imagine what Maritain, Christopher Dawson and Alfred Noyes will think of you. The girls have not made such a mess of *their* books. Stand up, girls. (Not you, Proust.) Come out here. There are the girls who have maintained human values: Sigrid Undset, Selma Lagerlöff, Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather, Edith Wharton and Virginia Woolf. No blots on their copybooks. What are you dreaming about, Virginia—you don't still believe in freedom, do you?—that's right, I want you to *try* and stand in line with the rest. You have a great culture behind you. Look at Miss Undset. She's a Catholic. That's the ideal, girls. It may not be possible for all of you to be Catholics, but you see what it has done for Miss Undset. I hope you've noticed, girls, how all the profound people of to-day are fighting hard to forget that the Renaissance or the Reformation ever happened; even the Communists want a revival of the collective life of the middle ages, though without God. I know there was no novel in the middle ages, Wells, but aren't you just being clever? Who is that muttering that the novel was the product of the emancipation of the middle class and the release of the individual after the Renaissance? I don't like that sort of talk in my class, and I warn you the Communists won't like it in theirs."

After the lesson was over, Miss Monroe went off with Miss Undset, who had just been made a prefect, and who was congratulating our teacher on a "ringing indictment." The rest of us got into a terrific argument. We all agreed it was a pity the novel was only three hundred years old and that Aristotle had not told us what we ought to do, though Shaw said Aristotle had never helped him in the theatre; and Ibsen had to hold Strindberg back and take a knife out of his hands. Strindberg said women had been at him all his life and that to hear a woman say that "the novelist's explorations of man's consciousness are more profound and subtle than those of the drama which must keep more or less to the surfaces of life" was murder in his ear. The English novelists were annoyed at Miss Monroe's snubs to their traditions; and, from Fielding to Henry James, said that faith and the sight of human personality as revealed by religious contemplation might be very reviving, but they had never been interested in it. The English apologised for their devotion to sociability in their novels, but compromise had always been an English weakness. We had perhaps made a fetish of thinking that, once the individual had been emancipated, he ought to make a point of being on good terms with his neighbours; people who put the absolute before their neighbours usually ended in the courts. Even Huxley's non-attachment, we said, was a sort of negative sociability; it was the non-attachment of conversation; not peace at any price, but peace at *prix fixe* and all prices marked clearly on the goods—the Quaker idea. We had compromised even on the idea of original sin because, having so little pre-historical mythology, we simply did not believe in symbolism or understand myths. We left them to our Celtic department. We really believed in original gregariousness. Someone asked how it was that Jane Austen—who surely had no profound philosophy of life and was too much of a lady to talk of the Incarnation and the Redemption—was a rather considerable writer. "And why didn't teacher say anything about George Eliot, who was intensely attracted to Judaism?" asked Virginia Woolf.

Edith Wharton summed this part up for us. "Teacher doesn't really mind," she said, "what your philosophy of life is as long as you are in beneficial contact with a long tradition, a tradition that does not separate the individual from society and respects human values. The novel has decayed because novelists have not had the assurance of an acceptable society behind them. Even shallow, rich, conventional New York of the 1900s was more solid ground than Tottenham Court Road in 1920." But we had a terrible row when teacher said *we* were responsible for undermining society. Some of us said we were what society had made us: we were expiating now the virtues of our grandparents. Others said, it was a novelist's duty to undermine some societies and again that accurate prophets were always condemned as malignant. What would Miss Monroe have done about Swift? Strindberg wanted to know whether an artist was not to be allowed to go mad?

One or two said the greatest writers had always reflected "the situation" of their times; the second-rate ones had evaded it. It was so much easier to close one's eyes and think of what one ought to do than to open them and see evidence. One must always distrust those who can see only one tendency in any situation: there are always at least two contradictory ones. The great novelists had always begun by startling us by the freshness of their evidence, the idiosyncrasy of their metaphor; and although it is true that their philosophy, whatever it was, stimulated them to collect their evidence, we were rarely impressed by their philosophy itself. One might condemn the novelists from 1910 to 1930 for showing little interest in man as part of the human community, for presenting him as a force, an adumbration of moments, a limpid, fragile and irresponsible ego; for making desire and not fruition the end of life. But in making this criticism, one must at the very least admit that novelists were reflecting with fidelity one of the effects of science on life and habit. The bad novelists stuck to convention. Miss Monroe holds that the Incarnation is a fact; but the scientific revolution is a fact too, and if she thinks that science is destroying the civilisation it has built, she must recall that religion burned men and women on behalf of the Incarnation, or complete human personality. The positive contribution to the novel in the last generation was autobiography; we need not be dismayed that any mode of art has within itself, like all other organisms, the seed of its own decay; for it also contains the seed of its successor.

We all admitted that teacher had had it too much her own way with Sigrid Undset, that she had been shrewd about Edith Wharton and best of all on Virginia Woolf (not a granddaughter of Thackeray, whatever teacher may say) because there she had to be more cautious. You have to be deferential to culture. We agreed that a return to moral conflict in the novel was essential. We did not see why modern American literature should be slanged because it was naturalistic: it is a picaresque literature, the literature natural to a society in chaos, as one can see by a glance at 17th century Europe. We doubted whether novelists could add a cubit to their stature by taking thought; they could add to themselves only by experience. Literature is the result of a marriage between man and the society he lives in; but it is not a romantic marriage freely chosen. It is an arranged marriage. History has arranged it.

By this time the discussion had gone far beyond any control. We had caught teacher's habit of not defining our terms and of wearing an I-know-what-I-know expression. (In the end, of course, that is all you can say about novelists or any artist; they *do* know what they know.) But it was noticeable how nobody had smiled or laughed when teacher was there, and even she got into a fix about comedy; and in considering the Greek tradition and classical values she quite forgot a writer called Aristophanes. She even had to agree that scepticism might produce great literature. And when the girls had gone, we said that, if one excepted Virginia, teacher had got together a collection of curiously *safe* talents for her discussion. Curious, because a Catholic writer of genius like Mauriac, would have made her case far better than a conscientious and tutorial medievalist like Sigrid Undset. But the thing that stuck in my throat was Miss Monroe's remark that our materialistic mass society was incapable of heroism: there spoke the theological theorist of the college cloister. In the last three years it is not merely the stoicism but the heroism of mass society and its enormous personality that have been striking. Scientific culture has not produced cities without souls. Why is it, after leaving school, you discover that so much of teacher's learning is borrowed and so much of her wisdom hearsay?

V. S. Pritchett

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*The Novel and Society. By N. Elizabeth Monroe. *The University of North Carolina Press and Oxford University Press. 18s. 6d.*

PILGRIMAGE IN MARXISM

Time, the Refreshing River. By Joseph Needham. *Allen & Unwin.* 16s.

This attractive book consists of eleven papers or essays on subjects varying from "Laud, the Levellers and the Virtuosi" to an estimate of Whitehead's Philosophy from the point of view of a biologist and from "A Revaluation of the Idea of Progress" to thoughts on the work of J. S. Haldane. Most of these essays and addresses are in the nature of prolegomena to the exposition of a thesis or illustrations and applications of a thesis already expounded. This thesis is set out in the first paper, "Metamorphoses of Scepticism." A word, first, on Dr. Needham's manner; let me say at once that in spite of their forbidding titles, Dr. Needham's expositions are at all times agreeable and are sometimes exciting. Here is no mere collection of theorems or a bare presentation of facts, but a gay and vigorous dissertation, the reader of which participates in the gallop of an able mind at full stretch over difficult country. The book is adorned with frequent and apt quotations from contemporary poets and rises on occasion to passages of considerable eloquence. Dr. Needham is, in fact, a first-rate advertisement of his own principle that the scientist should not stick to his last, but has as much right as anybody else to take the whole field of human experience, including art, literature and religion, in his stride. Finally, the argument is strung on a thread of personal conviction and development which invests the book with the interest of an intellectual and spiritual Odyssey.

Briefly the theme is as follows: in two previous books Dr. Needham has set out to explore the relations of science in general and biological science in particular to other forms of human experience. Broadly he came to two main conclusions; the first, that no one form of experience can claim "to be a royal road to our appreciation of the world in which we live," the second, that no comprehensive world-view "which would reconcile the conflicting claims of the forms of experience together" is likely to be attained, or is, indeed, attainable. It was precisely in his denial of the possibility of a synoptic philosophy that Dr. Needham's previous scepticism consisted. He has since discovered a principle of interpretation within whose bounds the various forms of experience are brought together and, as the result, conclusions emerge which, though not absolutely true—for the principle forbids the notion of absolute truth—do at least apply throughout the whole contemporary field of human thought, organisation and action. The principle in question is that of the dialetic; Dr. Needham, in fact, has become a Marxist, who finds within the all-embracing arms of the dialectical synthesis hospitable accommodation for all those elements which had previously refused to assimilate themselves into a single world view, "the evolutionary background, the materialist view of human history, the task of Eros in social progress, the revolutionary belief in the future world of justice and comradeship."

It was the omission of ethics from his previous synthesis that constituted, as Needham now sees, its greatest deficiency. Why could he not fit them in? Because he thought of man purely as an individual. Think of him as an individual, and you are led to a pessimistic view in regard to the future of society, a conception of human nature which regards man as irremediably evil—to the doctrine, in fact, of original sin—and to the concept of another order of reality regarded as at once a haven and a heaven, as, that is to say, an escape from the imperfections and a goal for the aspirations of human nature. On this view, contemplation of the real, not action in the unreal world, becomes the true end of human nature.

But " immediately one begins to consider man under his social aspect " all these separate concepts fuse and " the germs of a unified world-view appear."

I cannot here follow Dr. Needham into his numerous applications of the dialectical principle. Some of these are highly ingenious, for example, his reconciliation of the secular controversy between Materialism and Vitalism in biology in terms of a doctrine of levels of vital organisation, each level demanding principles of interpretation which, valid at that level, are invalid both above and below it, or his demonstration of the reconciliation and supersession of both scientific materialism and metaphysical idealism by the concept of " dialectical levels in nature, the highest of them including all man's highest experiences." Dialectical materialism is itself presented as a synthesis of these two partial doctrines which it supersedes. At this point one begins to look anxiously round for the contradictory tendency which is, presumably, lurking in the heart of dialectical materialism. Has it, one wonders, yet made its appearance? If so, wherein is it to be found? Is it perhaps in Fascism, and will the synthetic truth of the future be a dialectical reconciliation and supersession of both Fascism and Marxism? Or is dialectical materialism the last word in thought as Communism is in social organisation, negating by the very fact of its own finality the doctrine of eternally emerging and opposing contraries which it affirms. It is in no cavilling spirit that I ask this question, for in the atmosphere of enthusiastic agreement evoked by the hearty cheers with which I greeted page after page of Dr. Needham's book, the voice of the caviller is silenced. How timely, for example, is his demonstration of the relation between specialisation in science and reaction in politics—by virtue of his non-interference in matters which he wrongly supposes do not concern him the specialist assists sinister interests which profit by his indifference—and his conclusion, in an essay entitled " Pure Science and the Idea of the Holy," that what in the long run matters both ethically and politically are neither institutions nor policies nor traditions, but individual men and women who are born, fall in love, see visions, struggle and die.

I have one criticism. Dr. Needham is an optimist; again and again he speaks in terms of high hope of man's adventure. The evolutionary process, he says, works through individuals from Confucius to Marx, " to implement the Promise occluded in the very beginning of our world." The very title of his book implies that time is not an eternal recurrence, but the " organiser of the City of God," by which Dr. Needham means that, in spite of setbacks, " the curve of the development of human society pursues its way across the graph of history with statistical certainty." Progress, then, has a meaning; some forms of experience are " higher " than others; there is a goal for human effort and values by which we measure and appraise human experience on the way to the goal. Now a standard of measurement must be other than the process which it is invoked to measure. What place, then, one wants to know, is there for fixed and ultimate standards in a universe conceived exclusively as a developing dialectical process? Pending a satisfactory answer to this question it is impossible to concede to Dr. Needham the use of the normative terms which, in spite of himself, he cannot help but use.

C. E. M. Joad

NEW NOVELS

A Place in the Sun. By Frank Fenton. *Heinemann.* 9s. 6d.

Ellen Rogers. By James T. Farrell. *Routledge.* 10s. 6d.

Wife to Mr. Milton. By Robert Graves. *Cassell.* 8s. 6d.

The Bride Comes to Evensford. By H. E. Bates. *Cape.* 3s. 6d.

Since the last war the American novel has provided a series of damp squibs—Dos Passos, Faulkner, Dreiser, Farrell, Sinclair—the list could be sadly prolonged. There was every reason for expectations to be high. It is perennially assumed that European literature is decadent or exhausted, and the complementary assumption has been that raw salvation lay in the west. In the nineteenth century one tremendous American book seemed a pioneering shaft sunk deep into new seams of vitality and imagination. For those qualities no English novel of the time—perhaps of any time—can compare with Melville's *Moby Dick*. But Melville had no successors, and it was not until this century that a native American tradition became apparent. It was this tradition—realist, tough, immensely ambitious in scope, which was watched with eager admiration from England, and which has since run dry in a small-town wilderness without one major novel to its credit. The responsibility is partly Hollywood's. Nearly all the well-known American novelists of the inter-war period have been either directly associated with the film industry, or indirectly but powerfully affected by it. No influence could be more disastrous. The deplorable " News Reels " which are scattered through the works of Dos Passos are only the most self-conscious example of following a grossly false analogy. The ambition is to cover the widest possible area at news-reel level, and the result is a desert.

Within this barren tradition good novels have certainly been written—notably by the extreme individualist wing in the persons of Faulkner and Steinbeck. But the most interesting novels of the time have been outside the tradition altogether, isolated flames with a shape and hue all their own. *The Tropic of Cancer*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, even Carson McCuller's *Death in a Golden Eye*—these books have little in common with each other, but still less in common with the great tomes of Sinclalr and Dos Passos. Yet they are all unquestionably American; all have a flavour which is unlike anything European. It may even be that a new tradition is in the womb, rich, exotic and individual. Even the bitterest of the " traditional " novelists is at least a recessive product of the great boom. There is the arrogance, the superficiality, the size of great buildings and great fortunes. But Saroyan at his rare best, Scott Fitzgerald and the strange occasional products of such Paris Americans as Lawrence Vale, dive below the great American idol, below the clay feet of the idol, to the vivid imaginative life of individuals.

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Ohio to California, falls unhappily in love and goes home again, *A Place in the Sun* is a novel of quite unusual sensitivity. The quality is hard to describe, hard even to apprehend, for there are no ready parallels at hand. "Gentle" is a word with uneasy connotations, but no other word will do. The story in corrupt or unsubtle hands would be a hideous morass of sentimentality. Yet Mr. Fenton never comes near to that obvious danger. In his gentleness he is perceptive enough to rate physical deformity no deeper a tragedy than the crippling emotional disorders of the physically whole. It is the girl who kills herself, and Rob Andrews who ends the book with every prospect of happiness.

From this book, free from any pretension to anthropological catholicism, a far deeper and more exciting picture of America emerges than from the huge, hurried news-reels of the tradition.

Small descriptions of people and places give glimpses of a vast unexplored continent, a rich, varied civilisation which Europe has hardly begun to understand. This is not to say that Mr. Fenton has written a perfect, or even a satisfying, book. He is bold enough writer to risk the dangerous phrase: "Coolness came like a peace, like a white Christ dead at last on the cross of the horizon." In the richness of his language, such errors can sometimes steal maliciously through, but the marvel is that there are so few of them. Not a satisfying book because so much is suggested compared to the amount given. But Mr. Fenton has joined the honourable company of the lonely American novelists; he has given another provoking glimpse of that peculiar transatlantic vitality which may yet fulfil the hopes of an exhausted England.

The author of *Studs Lonigan* is at work on a cycle of some fifty novels. One imagines that, given a long life, he will cover the States from Texas to Massachusetts and from the Dead-End Kids to Rockefeller. Here is Mr. Farrell covering wilful Ellen Rogers and devil-may-care Ed. Lanson:

> "Ellen, do you like graveyards . . . I sometimes find them enchanting. When I am alone at night one of my favourite pre-occupations is to stroll around a graveyard. On a moonlight night they have a weird and eerie beauty. They are strange, fascinating. I spin fancies, ponder the mystery of life . . . Is love purely physical? Or is it something finer?" His moods and his conversation were so bewildering.

Ed, it should be pointed out, isn't meant to be a phoney, and Ellen is meant to be anything but a dumb blonde. The point about this conversation is that it is straightforward second-rate film script, and the whole book is on that level. Every character can be cast at first sight, and cast for a ham. *Ellen Rogers* is too bad a book to be taken as representative of American realism, but no novel could better illustrate the inelegant death of that tradition. The desperation which comes from reading Mr. Farrell is not simply that the writing, the people, and the situations are dull and unreal, but that the whole intention is a blind alley. Leave it to Gallup.

If Fenton is a spring and Farrell a desert, the two English novelists are floating gently on the River Cam. Robert Graves and H. E. Bates are not only among the dozen most distinguished living English novelists: they are also among the most representative. They must, since this is the high arbitrary standard of present comparison, be judged in terms of tradition, in terms of years rather than of the current month. Both are fine writers, skilful, lucid and sensitive. Neither could be guilty of Mr. Fenton's white Christ, still less of Ed. Lanson's churchyard cogitations. They are not experimental writers, but draw their strength from the thoughtful tradition of the minor English novel. The sad clear truth is that the river has begun to flow in circles; the current is too weak to break through into a new valley. It is significant that Mr. Graves should again write an historical novel, and (for the first time?) in archaic language; that Mr. Bates should re-write the tale of Scrooge in terms of charming dignity and nostalgia.

The first Mrs. Milton tells her story with high spirits and an endearing bias. Her language is a strange mixture of the archaic and the modern, not displeasing in itself but full of uncomfortable conclusions for the modern reader. Why should Mr. Graves attempt this *tour de force*, particularly when he finds it necessary to append a glossary? Surely modern English is quite as rich and subtle as Caroline. The erudition, too, is admirable but out of place: "Barley . . . we mow with a scythe which has no cradle . . . we cock with a fork of three prongs, the cocks being well-topped and of medium size." This is certainly Flaubertian accuracy, but Flaubert's devotion to detail has made *Salammbô* the least readable of all his novels. The poverty of a tradition is seldom better seen than in this devotion to the irrelevant. For the rest, *Wife to Mr. Milton* is a clever and engrossing book; the people are remarkably alive and the lyrical descriptions have the grace of Mr. Graves's poetry.

Mr. Bates's long short story has a fine elegant shape, covering with formidable skill a period of thirty years in only twice as many pages. It is the tale of an ambitious mean-spirited woman struggling for power in a provincial town. Mrs. Cartwright succeeds in buying up the neighbouring shops, enlarging her stores, acquiring acres of slum property and the hatred of the whole town. Unlike Scrooge her conversion comes too late, and her heart is opened in vain. A word, significantly frequent in novel reviews, is too insistent to be avoided: "restraint." Mr. Bates is a master of restraint, and in a period of over-exuberance how welcome that would be. To-day, things are different.

They use the snaffle and the curb all right
But where's the bloody horse?

Of the novelists under review, only Mr. Fenton seems to be riding some sort of indeterminate colt.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

A SOCIAL PARAGON

Admiral's Widow. Being the Life and Letters of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Boscawen from 1761 to 1805. By BRIG.-GENERAL CECIL ASPINALL-OGLANDER. *Hogarth Press.* 12*s*. 6*d*.

"Each art of conversation knowing,
High-bred, elegant Boscawen . . ."

wrote Dr. Burney during the course of a somewhat elephantine eulogium on his patronesses, the *Bas Bleus*. The whole coterie was eminent—Montagu, Delany, Thrale, even that late and ambitious arrival, Miss Hannah More; but Mrs. Boscawen had pre-eminently the art of pleasing. True, she was no beauty; her wit seems to have consisted in a quick and genuine sympathy with other people's interests; but her friends loved, her acquaintances admired, her; and Boswell, who belonged to the second category, after meeting Mrs. Boscawen at the house of Allan Ramsay, the portrait-painter, in 1778, remarked that "if it be not presumptuous of me to praise her, I would say that her manners are the most agreeable, and her conversation the best, of any lady" to whom he had ever had the happiness of being presented. In Boswell's eyes she had the supreme merit of amusing Johnson. Famous highbrows were among her intimates, but she had married off one daughter to a young and delightful Duke, and (unlike many mothers of successfully married children) she timed her visits to Badminton with

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such discretion, she was so pleasant an addition to the family party, and so little an encumbrance, that her daughter, son-in-law, and handsome grandchildren conspired to adore and spoil her.

Mrs. Boscawen, in fact, was a social paragon. But more interesting than the observation of her undoubted social talents is an examination of the historical background from which those gifts emerged. In one respect (sufficiently obvious yet, perhaps for that very reason, not always taken into account by students of the period) the men and women of the eighteenth century were of a breed very different from their modern counterparts. Since the accidents of birth and the diseases of infancy then accounted for a large proportion of human offspring, few persons entered the adult world who did not possess deep reserves of physical and nervous energy. In the weakness of Horace Walpole there was (he himself admitted) something Herculean. Even Pope had managed to combine a sickly constitution with incessant intellectual work and a resolute enjoyment of worldly pleasures; and, though his life was a "long disease," he was able to support its burden for more than half a century. We are constantly surprised, therefore, by the vigour and resilience of the Augustan temperament, by its passionate sociability and ebullient gaiety, its unwearied addiction to pleasure, and its stoical endurance of the exquisite physical agonies through which the body took its revenge for merciless ill-treatment. Mrs. Boscawen had a considerable share of the energy and stoicism of the period from which she sprang. She had loved her husband devotedly, but, as Admiral of the Blue during the Seven Years' War, he could very seldom pay a visit to his wife and children, and died of fever abroad in 1761. Then, in 1769, her favourite son was drowned swimming off Jamaica. Her youngest son fought at Lexington and Bunker's Hill; she saw the war of 1778, the French Revolution, and the wars that followed. She survived till her eighty-sixth year, unbroken and unembittered, finally expiring only a few months before the Battle of Trafalgar.

During that span, notwithstanding the repeated blows that death dealt to her affections—in the experience of Mrs. Boscawen and her contemporaries the intrusions of death were almost always brutal and unexpected—she remained her good-natured, equable, "elegant," and (it is fair to add) slightly snobbish self. She enjoyed her visits to Badminton and her house in Audley Street. She loved the country (which was just beginning to recede from Enfield), the "jewel of a blackbird" which sang beneath her windows, the haycocks and the lilacs, the peaches, nectarines, and pineapples that eighteenth-century gardeners produced so prodigally, the conversation of her many distinguished friends, and, perhaps, the sound of her own voice. A very nice, shrewd, sympathetic, worldly wise old lady, as we gather from the characteristic pastel-portrait now at Bill Hill reproduced opposite page 97. She wrote pleasantly rather than brilliantly, but in the tiny pocket-mirror her letters provide there are odd engaging glimpses of the historic background—George III trots up to the edge of the haw-haw across his "great turnip-field"; Mrs. Boscawen curtsies from her chaise, and the monarch takes off his hat. One cannot subscribe to a posthumous description of Mrs. Boscawen as "*La Sévigné d'Angleterre*"; but one is grateful to the piety of General Aspinall-Oglander, which, having given us that extremely readable book, *Admiral's Wife*, now furnishes a worthy companion-piece in the *Admiral's Widow*.

PETER QUENNELL

JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson. By S. K. PADOVER. *Cape.* 21*s.*

Mr. Padover has set out to paint a straightforward portrait of his hero; and since he at once knows his materials intimately, and cares deeply about his subject, the result is as good a biography of Jefferson as the English reader could desire. It gives one a full sense of his personal charm, the width of his interests, his courage, both moral and intellectual, and his noble simplicity. This is the Jefferson whom the Democrats of his day worshipped with a fervour as profound as the hatred the Federalists heaped upon him. It is a clear portrait from the angle of vision it adopts; and since there are not half-a-dozen Americans whose acquaintance is better worth making, his book ought to take its place as easily, within its range, the most useful account there is.

But it should be said with some emphasis that the issues raised by Jefferson's career are far from so simple as Mr. Padover has been able to make them. No one needs to deny that he was a great statesman and a great President to recognise that in his great battles with Hamilton and Marshall, he did not always see either as far or as profoundly as they did, and that there is a vital sense—in the Louisiana purchase, for example—in which his supreme service to the young United States was achieved by a denial of the central doctrine of the Constitution for which he stood. It is also, I think, fairly to be said that Mr. Padover tends to confound the simplicity of Jefferson's manners with an assumed simplicity of mind. The truth is that, like most really eminent politicians, though his principles were simple, his methods were complex. The man who overthrew the Federalist party was a tortuous, if brilliant, intriguer, who had little to learn from any of his opponents about the roads through the jungle to political power. Nor is it necessary to accept at its face value his incessant sighs for the peace of private life; most politicians in office spend their time in pious protestations of this sort; and there has rarely been a Cincinnatus, whether in Virginia or in London, who will not gracefully yield to the pressure to leave his farm. The simple truth is that Jefferson was a superb politician, and it is the essence of the politician to be uncomfortable out of office. No doubt the gentleman, whether in America or in Britain, must set his ambition in a context which conceals the degree to which it clutches at his heart. Lord Baldwin must talk about pigs when it is East Fulham that is on his mind; Theodore Roosevelt will discuss Byzantine history with Professor Diehl while he wonders whether a third term is a final impossibility. It is part of the technique to express a fear of the grim burden while he plots out the pattern of the next administration. Jefferson was profoundly ambitious, and he enjoyed the battles he won. If this had not been the case, if he had been no more than a gentleman-farmer from Virginia whose patriotism compelled him to legislatures and embassies, to the cabinet and the White House, to that combination of high endeavour and low manipulation which the statesman cannot avoid who wishes to shape the lives of men, Mr. Padover would not have had this fascinating tale to tell us.

It is a good biography of a very great man, of the President who, in sheer intellectual power, is perhaps the greatest in the succession. It is the fact of that power, of the extraordinary influence that some of Jefferson's most important ideas still exercise in America, that makes me regret that Mr. Padover did not devote a little more attention to the character of the Jeffersonian political philosophy. How much did he owe to books? What was the impact upon him of those vivid years in France? How did he manage, in the relative simplicity of an agrarian democracy, to foresee with such precision the dangers that commercial growth would bring in its trail? What did he learn from the Physiocrats, wha

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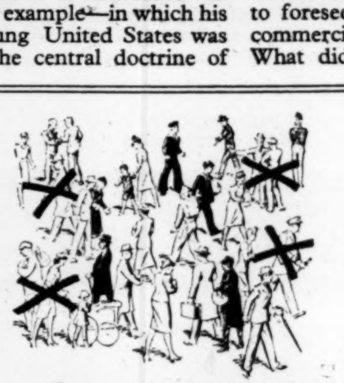

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from Montesquieu and Rousseau and Paine? Though much has been written on the Jeffersonian creed, notably by historians of the quality of Carl Becker and Charles Beard, a good deal still remains to be done. Not least—there is a hint of this in Mr. Padover's pages, a good book could be written on the Jeffersonian theory of revolution; and I am not sure that a careful exposition of its implications would not reveal that this remains the most living and creative part of his doctrine. HAROLD J. LASKI

Week-end Competitions

No. 682

Set by G. W. Stonier

The usual prizes are offered for a twelve-line poem designed to be illustrated by one of the following: Thurber, Low, Ardizzone, Osbert Lancaster or H. M. Bateman.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, March 8th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 679

Set by V. S. Pritchett

The usual prizes are offered for an imaginary postscript to a letter written by any two of the following:—Hitler, Henry James, Mussolini, Madame Blavatsky, Queen Victoria, Marie Lloyd, Surtees, Samuel Butler, the Duke of Wellington, Marcel Proust, Jane Austen, D. H. Lawrence, Noel Coward, George Moore.

Report by V. S. Pritchett

A man or woman must be reckoned irretrievably dead when no one makes a joke about them any more; that is what has happened to Madame Blavatsky. Alone amongst the list of names hers was neglected. One or two competitors mistook me and thought that I wanted one postscript from two hands, instead of two distinct ones. This error led to an amusing collaboration by G. J. Blundell between Queen Victoria and Henry James, both declining to work together on an English travel book. For the rest, James, Hitler, Mussolini, and the Duke of Wellington were failures. The Duke got his "damn" in, but nothing of account with it. William Bliss must be greatly congratulated on a brilliant Jane Austen and the only Surtees; he shares in the prize, but, alas, there is space only for his Austen. Among so many wits the fairest thing to do seems to be to deal out prizes all round; and they are accordingly divided among the following.

JANE AUSTEN (in a letter to her eldest brother, at sea).

P.S.—I open this letter, which I had written yesterday, to tell you the latest news, which is that I have just received another offer of marriage.

You know him, I think, but since I have refused him I do not think it fair to tell you his name. He may tell you himself, perhaps, if he chooses . . . He was both flattering and ardent. He spoke of my beauty, which I took with a smile as being something necessary on these occasions, and he praised my books, which I confess moved me *almost* to think of accepting him. But though he pleased my vanity he did not stir my senses . . . I have indeed wished sometimes that Providence had so ordained these matters that we need be married only with our minds . . .

I remember your asking me, when you were last at home, which of the heroes of my own books I would choose to have married, and I said "None of them!" and I think it was true. Certainly not Darcy. Indeed, I sometimes doubt if Elizabeth Bennet (in whom I put a good deal of myself) would, in real life, even after she had tamed him, have run the risk of marrying him. *I* certainly should not.

The one I think I have the tenderest feelings toward is my first hero, the hero of the first completed book I wrote I mean, Henry Tilney, in *Northanger Abbey*. Oh! but I forget. I do not think you know him—or did I ever show you the manuscript of that *romantic* story, almost my favourite, I think? It has lain in lavender in the drawer of my writing table these ten years. I will show it to you when you are next at home (if I have not yet sold it) and you will understand. It is natural that I should be faithful to my first love—though I daresay I have been a little in love with all my heroes—while I was creating them!

And yet, I do not know. I doubt if Henry Tilney would have held me. He had a horrid, selfish and snobbish father—and I should have been afraid . . .

On calm reflection I think perhaps that Mr. Bennet (though no hero)—in whom, as well as in his daughter Lizzie, I put some of my own quizzical character—would have been my most satisfactory life-partner.

And, yet again, I am not sure. For would Mr. Bennet have been as amusing as I tried to make him if he had not married a fool? And could I——? You see!

No, my dear brother, I fear I must live and die a Spinster. (WILLIAM BLISS)

HENRY JAMES.

What do *you* think Maisie knew?

(F. H. KING)

SAMUEL BUTLER.

S.P.—Teem em ta eth Erishech Eseech.

(SZCZEPAN CHRZASZSZ)

You say my book leads you nowhere. Quite the reverse, surely. (G. T. HOLMES)

QUEEN VICTORIA.

To Mr. Darwin.—By the way, do you really believe that your *Origin of Species* can also apply to the Royal Family? (MARGARET POPE)

As to the unpleasantness which marred her departure and took away the *whole pleasure* of her visit, the Queen wishes it to be known that *nobody* relishes more than herself a *bon mot* or a truly droll situation (the admirable publication *Punch* is full of them, *several* of which the Queen has found *most* diverting), but to have an insulting (and *quite untrue*) remark *screeched* at her as she was taking her leave is *far* from droll, though some of her subjects seemed to find it so (and the Queen remembers their names and *will certainly not forget' them*). The Queen considers the servants' hall to be the fitting place for such contraptions and recommends that both parrot and cage be moved there *immediately*.

(ARTHUR MARSHALL)

Please realise that I do not feel that it is at all *decent* for you to play for money, *especially* when your dear mama's *face* is upon every single coin.

(D. W. BARKER)

NOEL COWARD.

I forgot to tell you that this morning I received Churchill's permission to arrange the entertainment side of the Peace Conference, so I've dashed off a sort of Russian Cavalcade, based on War and Peace; music Tschaikovsky-Coward, I'm playing Stalin. There's a too too Beatrice Lillie number, "Britons, never, never shall be Slavs." Rehearsals start to-morrow. (STANLEY J. SHARPLESS)

Have I ever told you that you are too too terribly sweet? (M. MURRAY)

MARIE LLOYD.

They say it does you good even if it's ever so little. Just fancy! (GEORGE T. HOLMES)

A little of what you fancy does you good, but keep away from the bargain basement.

(PERCY WHICHELO)

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